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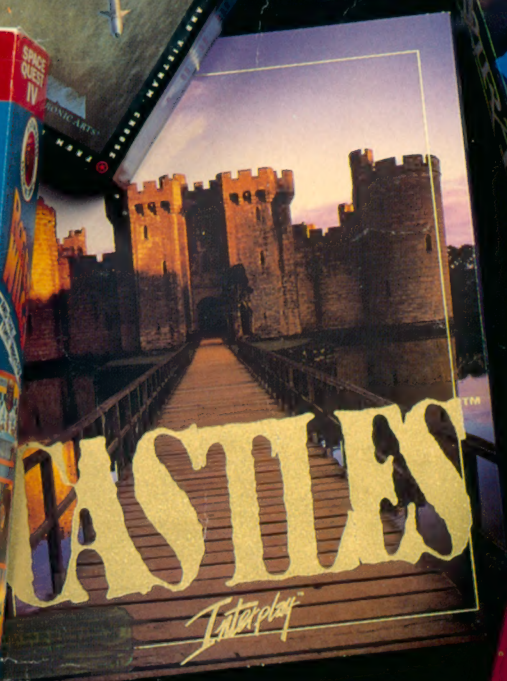
GAME PLAYERS™ ENCYCLOPEDIA of PC GAMES

Volume Two











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The greatest hero for the Hyborean Age was a fierce barbarian born of the harsh northlands,

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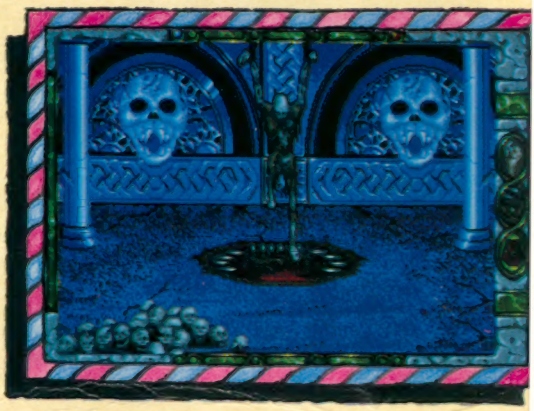
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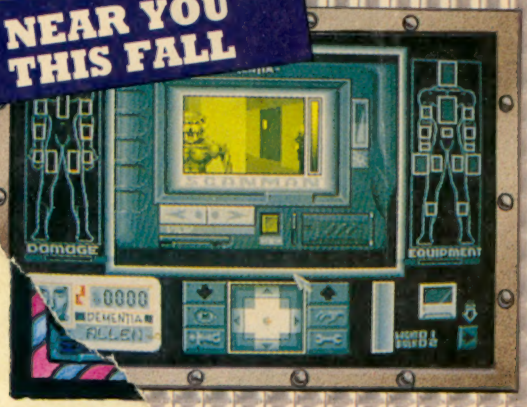
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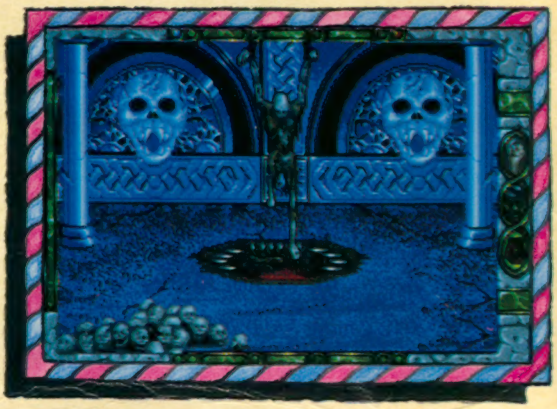
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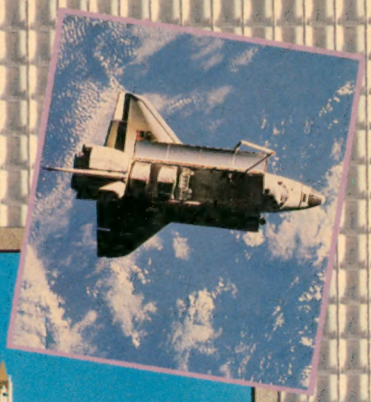


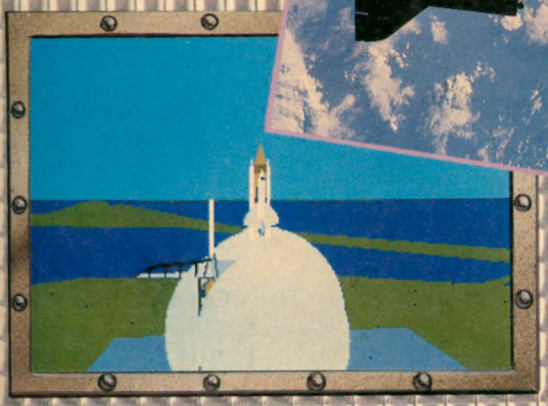
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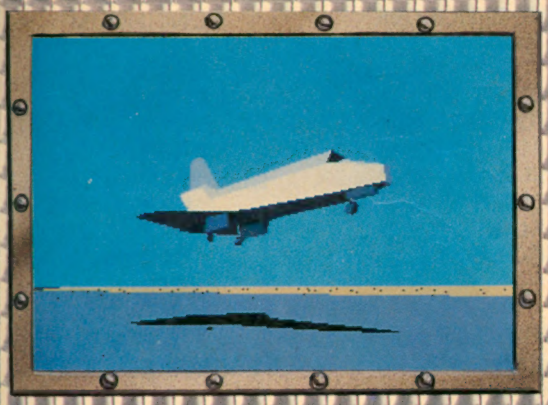
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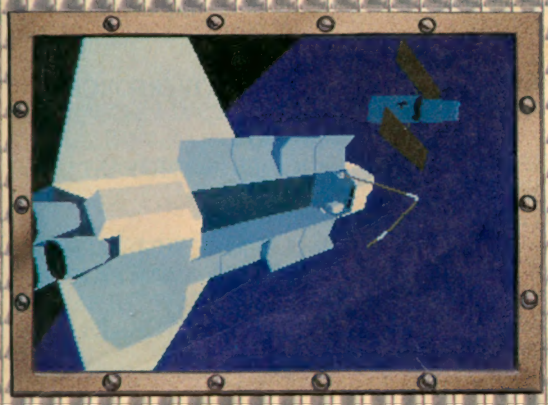
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EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to Volume 2 of *Game Player's Encyclopedia of PC Games*. We think you'll find that this publication is an excellent resource for both new and veteran PC game players.

The contents of this encyclopedia are taken from our *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide* magazine (recently renamed *Game Player's PC Entertainment*), a regular publication that focuses on all PC entertainment titles, including arcade action, fantasy role play, educational games, graphic adventures, puzzle games, war games, simulations, and so on.

In this volume, you'll find coverage of a number of games from the past couple of years as well as games just recently released. You'll find extensive coverage, with lots of color screen shots, of some very popular titles, including *Falcon 3.0*, *Hare Raising Havoc*, *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *SimCity*, *Mean Streets*, and *Might & Magic II*.

All in all, we have 81 PC games covered in this volume. Note that we've included selections from Alternate Lives and Virtual Reality, two of our regular magazine columns in which our expert columnists get inside a game and offer some revealing insights. You'll find these beginning on page 166.

So if you're an avid PC gamer, check this volume out — we think you'll find that it's a valuable resource you can come back to time and time again.

Lance Elko
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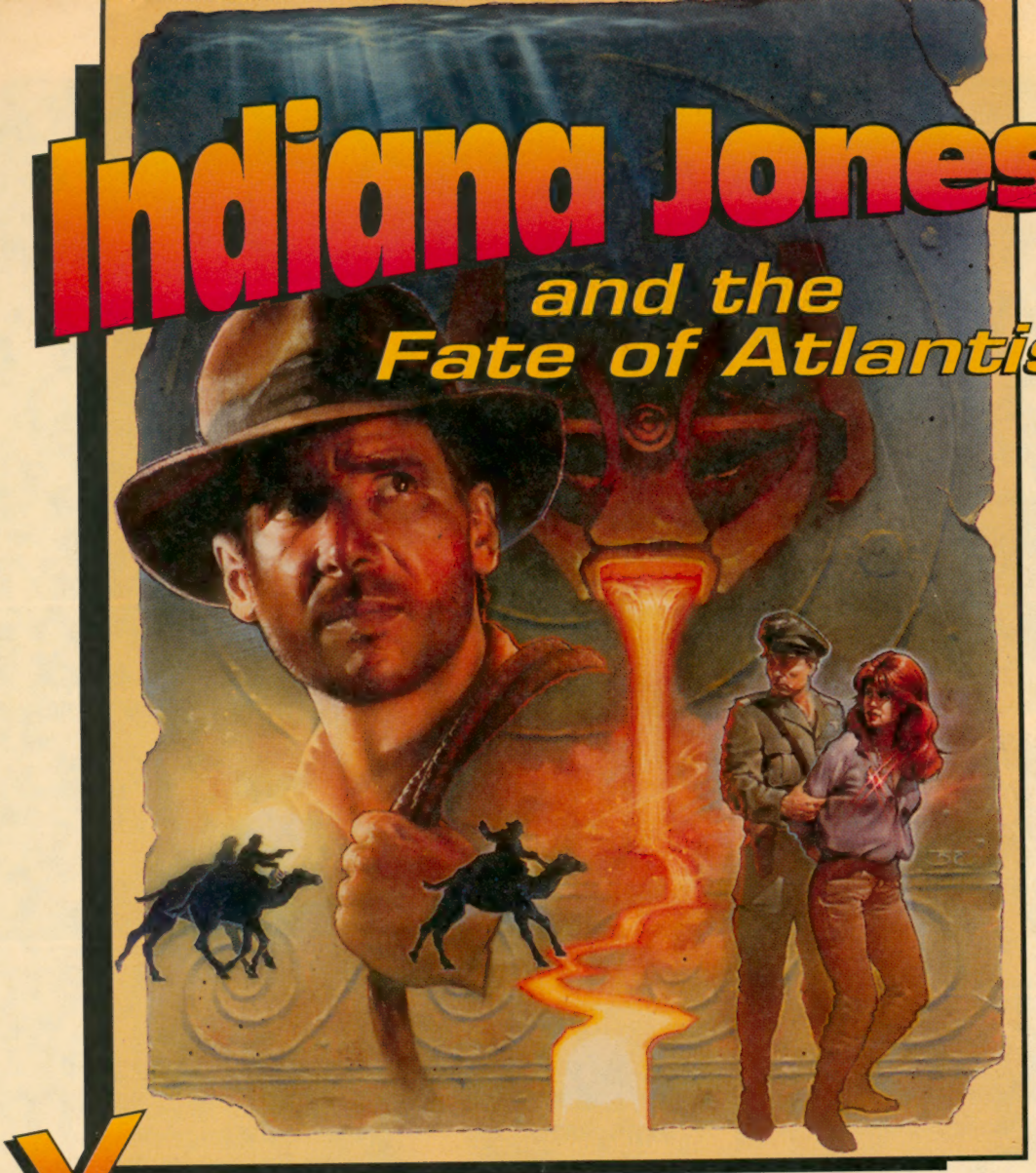
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Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis



Leslie Mizell

You may have thought Indiana Jones had hung up his hat and whip for good when George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Harrison Ford decided not to make a fourth movie in the now-famous series. But a good man is hard to find, and **Lucasfilm Games** has picked up where the movie studio left off.

For *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis*, Lucasfilm Games has developed an original adventure for the full-time archeology professor and part-time adventurer. Naturally, there's a woman involved: In this game, she's Sophia Hapgood, once an academic, now a professional psychic.

When she and Jones realize that the Nazis are hunting for mythical Atlantis — and have actually acquired artifacts from the lost city — they know that they must beat the Third Reich to the ancient site. If the legends of Atlantis prove true, an ore could be mined there that would hasten the arrival of the Atomic Age. With more potential energy than uranium, the metal could make Nazi world domination a very real possibility.

The *Fate of Atlantis* journey takes you from Iceland to the Azores, from Monte Carlo to Knossos. It's Lucasfilm's most complex game to date, and the only one that truly offers alternate game paths — you can play several times without repeating anything but the most basic sequences. For example, one of your first tasks is to locate the Lost Dialogue of Plato. The book is somewhere in Indy's own Barnett College, but it could be in one of three different locations. Where the dialogue will be when *you* play the game depends on a clue you receive in the Azores.

It's after you find the dialogue that you arrive at the various courses the adventure can take. During a conversation with Sophia, you decide how you want to solve the rest of the game. If you agree to let Sophia join you in the search for Atlantis, you follow a path consisting equally of puzzles and conversations. If you decide you'd rather go into action by yourself, prepare for plenty of fighting and not much



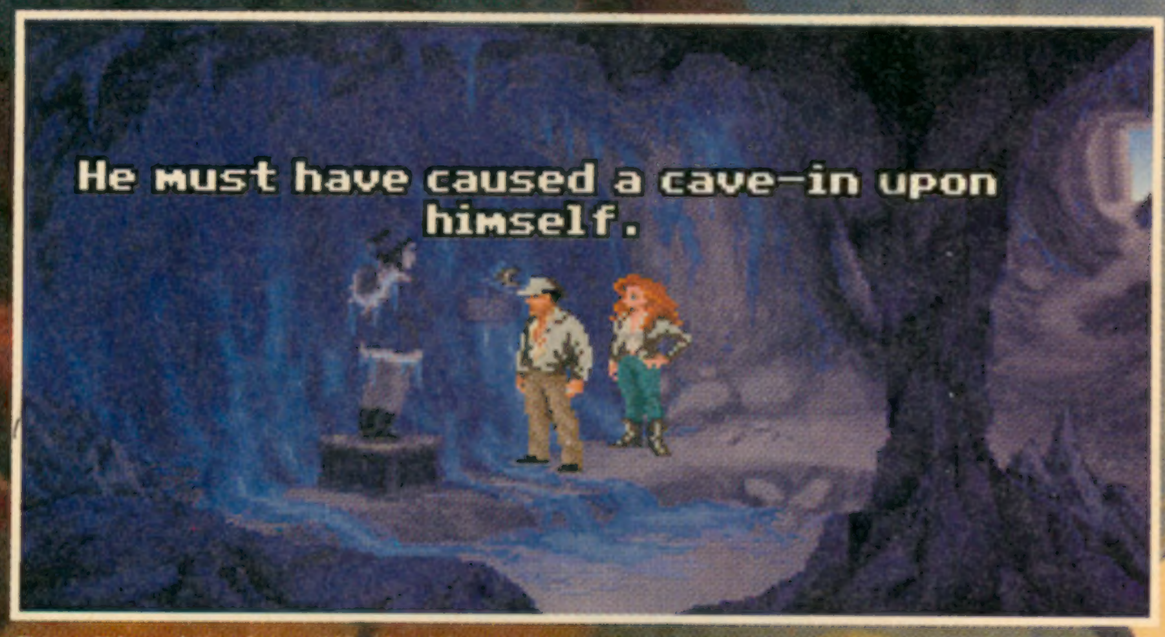
Even if Indy liked snakes, he wouldn't tangle with this python. Let nature take its course and search for another creature to do the dirty work.



You visit almost every continent in your journey to find the lost continent — Atlantis.



Sternhart won't let you into the temple unless you can prove your credentials. Polly is the key to this puzzle.



Poor Bjorn! Perhaps if he had been a little warmer toward Indiana and Sophia, he might have escaped this chilly fate.

puzzle-solving, while another path forces you to rely on your wits alone.

The graphics in *Fate of Atlantis* leave even great games such as Lucasfilm's earlier *Loom* and *The Secret of Monkey Island* in the dust. It's the company's first true 256-color VGA game, with all the complex, rich colors you'd expect from an enhanced palette. Yet despite the added pressure of painting complex and sharply defined VGA graphics, the game played smoothly even in beta form, with quick transition from screen to screen.

Fate of Atlantis requires as little as 525K of RAM — a rare feat these days, when almost every program using VGA graphics demands significantly more memory. Hard disk installation is definitely recommended, and a mouse or joystick is much better than the cursor keys for maneuvering the on-screen pointer.

The designers have slightly modified the familiar SCUMM point-and-click interface for a cleaner look. The commands are still on the bottom left of the screen and the inventory beside them on the right, but now the design is modular, with each item in your inventory represented by a graphic icon.

Best of all, *Fate of Atlantis* is fun to play. Since it's only moderately difficult (that means you pound your keyboard in frustration only every hour or so) you can move at a fairly quick pace through the easy passages, and devote more time to the challenging puzzles. Of course, just because you can't really die (unless you follow the action path), don't think that there's no need to save your games frequently.

You might not see Indy again on the silver screen, but don't be surprised if he continues to pop up on your computer monitor for many years to come.

GP



Meanwhile, back in the lab.... The Nazis have their hands on orichalcum, that mysterious, powerful ore from Atlantis.



The Lost Dialogue of Plato is hidden in one of three collections of books. You can spot two of the three in the basement archives.



A little ghost story should send Alain Trottier screaming from the room. The Sun Stone is now yours.



No one wants to be a knife-thrower's assistant, but all Sophia needs to volunteer is a little shove in the right direction.



The second stone can be found in the ancient ruins on Crete. Just dig where X marks the spot.



Steering a balloon isn't hard — simply adjust the balloon's air and ballast. Landing, however, is a different story.



Atlantis found at last!



The final stone is locked safely away on board the submarine. Your problem-solving should take care of that strongbox.

FALCON 3.0: Soaring To New Heights Of Realism



SELBY BATEMAN

We're pleased to be able to bring our readers a special preview of Spectrum Holobyte's advanced super-realistic F-16 jet fighter simulation — *Falcon 3.0* — headed for store shelves by early August.

System Requirements: IBM-compatible AT (80286) or faster; supports 256-color VGA, 16-color VGA, and EGA graphics; provides complete sound support for the PS/1, Ad Lib, SoundBlaster, and Roland sound cards; joystick and mouse supported.

When Spectrum Holobyte introduced the F-16 fighter simulation *Falcon* in 1987, desktop computer pilots sat up and took notice. Never before had such realism been brought to microcomputers. Winning a bevy of computer entertainment awards, *Falcon* quickly garnered rave reviews and a loyal following among flight simulation fans and, importantly, actual pilots.

Rather than rest on Falcon's successes, company executives made the considerable investment in money and people for a long-term commitment to stay at the cutting edge of realism in aerial-combat simulations. And the results of those decisions appear to be a major leap forward in several ways.

Several Game Player's editors got their first chance to view the *Falcon 3.0* work-in-progress early in January on the exhibit floor of the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Scarcely a week later, millions of Americans were glued to their televisions watching the astonishing and extensive coverage of the unfolding air war in the Persian Gulf. High-tech allied weaponry literally began redefining the conduct and even the nature of modern warfare -- and the world had a front-row seat.



The Padlock viewing system mimics a pilot's 360-degree cockpit visibility in tracking moving objects.



Falcon 3.0's *3-D contoured terrain adds to the realism of the flights.*

For those of us who had so recently seen the Super VGA graphics of *Falcon 3.0*, the parallels between the aerial campaign being shown live on television and the Spectrum Holobyte simulation were astounding. Combining 3-D contoured terrain (taken from actual topographic maps), state-of-the-art flight and combat modeling, advanced algorithms, stunning graphics, and digitized photos — the new 3.0 version looked and flew like nothing we'd seen before.

What's so special about *Falcon 3.0*?

In brief, the new simulation takes today's leading-edge PC hardware speed and memory to the max. Not only are the flight characteristics greatly enhanced, but the program also features major improvements in realistic 256-color VGA graphics, a newly

developed 360-degree Padlock viewing system that mimics actual cockpit "situational awareness," a "black-box" TACTS (see accompanying box) replay feature that works in a VCR mode or a 3-D cube mode, and several different radar modes that are almost identical to the real thing. (Beginning flyers can select an "easy" radar mode until they're ready to step up to the more complex levels.) There are a host of additional air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons, including SAM missiles, small-arms fire, Hind helicopters, infantry, the Mirage F1, MiG fighters, and much more.

All of this is set in a framework that allows the armchair pilot to choose from an Instant Action arcade mode, a customizable Red Flag fighter training school, or -- most importantly -- a Campaign mode that permits the player to command and pilot a squadron of up to eight aircraft at the same time (from a total squadron of 16 planes) in three theaters of operations -- Israel, Panama, and Kuwait.

This Campaign component of the simulation insures that virtually every campaign will be different since the system assigns individual missions based on your own relative success or failure.

"Let's say you're in Israel fighting the Syrians, who are already in Lebanon," says Gary Stottlemyer, one of Falcon's chief software engineers. "They're coming southward out of Lebanon, crossing out of the Golan Heights. You basically get two fronts at the outset of the campaign.

"The Syrian tanks have to cross the Jordan River, and if you bomb the strategic bridges, you slow them. At the same time, Syrian air power will be attacking your air bases. If your air bases are hit, you have to move south — and that causes you a lot of problems. But if you don't bomb the bridges, then the Syrians come streaming across and possibly capture your airbase anyway. Depending on what you do, the rest of the campaign will be greatly affected."

Stottlemyer likens the mission assignments to a strategy game such as chess. That is, the Campaign mode adjusts depending on who does what.



Graphics in the new 256-color VGA game are strikingly better than in earlier Falcon *games.*

Using a specialized tree structure, your assignments to bomb certain targets might change depending on whether they're in enemy or friendly hands during different parts of the campaign.

There are more than 2,000 map targets that can be bombed in *Falcon 3.0*, and the contoured terrain shows actual cities and even major structures in each theater.

Make no mistake about it. To take full advantage of all that *Falcon 3.0* offers, you'll need more than an 80286 PC with EGA color graphics. Sure, it'll run on such a system, and be a lot of fun. Various parts of the simulation, such as terrain detail, can be toggled down for optimized play on slower machines. But when you're pushing out the frontiers of flight and combat simulation, you get your best results right now on an 80386 system with Super VGA color graphics. You can even employ an optional math coprocessor in your computer to achieve the "high-fidelity" flight model which brings Falcon 3.0's realism even closer to the low-cost flight trainers that Spectrum Holobyte also develops for the military.

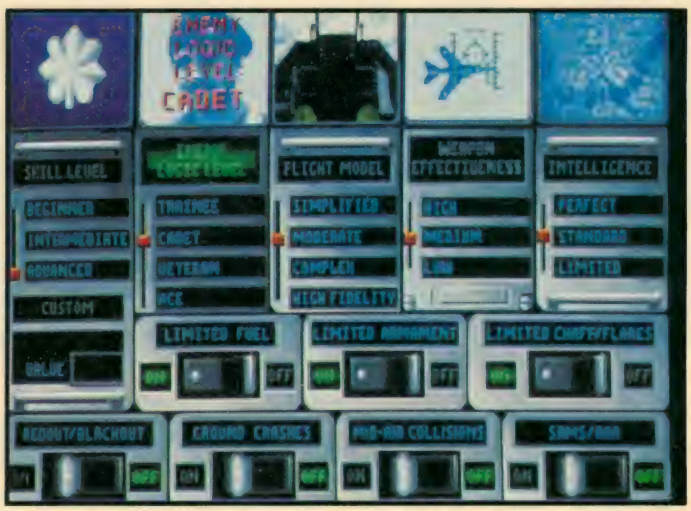


Whether you're bombing a bridge or taking out tanks, there's plenty of action in these unfriendly skies.

With *Falcon 3.0*, Spectrum is taking the long view, willing to sacrifice sales to computer game players who have older and weaker machines in favor of staying on the cutting edge of simulations. *Falcon 3.0* is just one of several products that are to be a part of Spectrum's Electronic Battlefield Series (EBS) -- four advanced products that will permit players to compete and cooperate across games via modem, direct connection, or local-area network (LAN). *Falcon 3.0* is the first of these, to be followed this fall by *Avenger A-10*, and later by an M1A1 Abrams tank simulation and an Apache helicopter simulation.



Target waypoints are set for your next mission in this map view from the Kuwait theater of operations.



You can select levels for skill, enemy logic, flight model, weapon effectiveness, and intelligence from the configuration screen.

"*Falcon 3.0* is the first to integrate all the technology we want to have for two or more players to participate in missions together, and not necessarily in the same type of vehicle," says Gilman Louie, Spectrum Holobyte's chairman and CEO.

"For example, three or four players could be flying A-10s and three or four flying F-16s [on a network], competing or cooperating," says Louie, "Or you could have two players using modems against or with each other."

Don't expect aerial combat to be the fish-in-a-barrel shooting exercise that some low-end aerial combat games have featured. Whether you choose the Instant Action arcade mode, the Red Flag school, or the Campaign, making the flying and dogfighting experience as true to life as possible was the highest prior-



In the Trace mode, you can discover various enemy actions and related threats along your mission route.



The sky can be alive with aircraft in the blink of an eye. Just make sure you don't knock out one of your own wingmen.



All of the actual weaponry options for your aircraft are available in the Load Armament section of the simulation.

ity for Gilman Louie and his staff.

Watching Stottlemyer take *Falcon 3.0* through some of its paces is an exciting experience for those familiar with jet



The ability to command up to eight aircraft simultaneously broadens the game experience considerably.



When selecting your pilots for each mission, try to choose a mix of experienced and novice combat flyers.

fighter simulations. "The world you fly in is much more realistic," says Stottlemyer as he sends the F-16 into a steep descent toward the desert floor thousands of feet below. "You get a better sense of what you'd really see up there." As the world rushes toward the plane, details and contours grow more pronounced. The horizon line has a graduated look that gives a remarkable 3-D

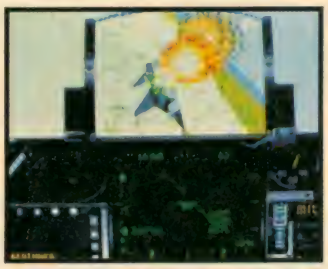


You can receive detailed information — including an animated view — of virtually every ground and air unit in the simulation.

perspective. Leveling off at low altitude, he blasts the fighter through several narrow mountain valleys with an ease that comes only from plenty of flight time.



The Heads Up Display (HUD) view offers plenty of information, and is just one of a variety of viewing angles available.



Explosions and other graphics are extremely detailed and fluid in the new Falcon.

Millions of Americans recently learned much more about the actual details and realities of modern warfare. And along with that came the reminder for many that an informed public is a public better prepared for the future. As William Trotter, writing in these pages in our last issue, stated: "In my mind, there exists today no greater educational tool for expanding historical literacy than a good computer simulation." *Falcon 3.0* supports that dictum superbly. If you want the utmost in aerial combat realism -- and a rich simulation environment that's as challenging as it is engaging -- *Falcon 3.0* is for you.

Falcon 3.0 Features

ASAT: Advanced Situational Awareness Trainer, the flight trainer developed by Spectrum for the military to duplicate as closely as possible the flight dynamics of the F-16, available in Falcon 3.0 in "high fidelity" mode using a math coprocessor.

EBS: The Electronic Battlefield Series, Spectrum's plan to publish four advanced computer combat simulations that can be played singly or by multiple users via modem, direct connection, or LAN. Includes Falcon 3.0.

Padlock View: A newly developed pilot viewing system that lets the player keep enemy aircraft in sight by panning 360 degrees across the sky from the cockpit perspective.

Radar Systems: Includes switchable Easy, Intermediate, and Hard (Actual) levels for Normal Air Modes (NAM), Air Combat Mode (ACM), Single-Target Tracking (STT), Ground Mode, and Terrain Masking.

TACTS: Tactical Aircrew Combat Training System, the simulation's "black box" replay feature that can be used in VCR mode (game-level realism) or in 3-D cube mode (wire-frame environment for tactical study). There are four different flight models, with "high fidelity" being the most advanced.

Theaters of Operation: Panama, Israel, and Kuwait — covering more than 270,000 square miles of fighting area.

Types of Play: Instant Action arcade mode; Red Flag customizable training mode; and Campaign, multiple-plane missions which are different each campaign depending on success or failure.

GP

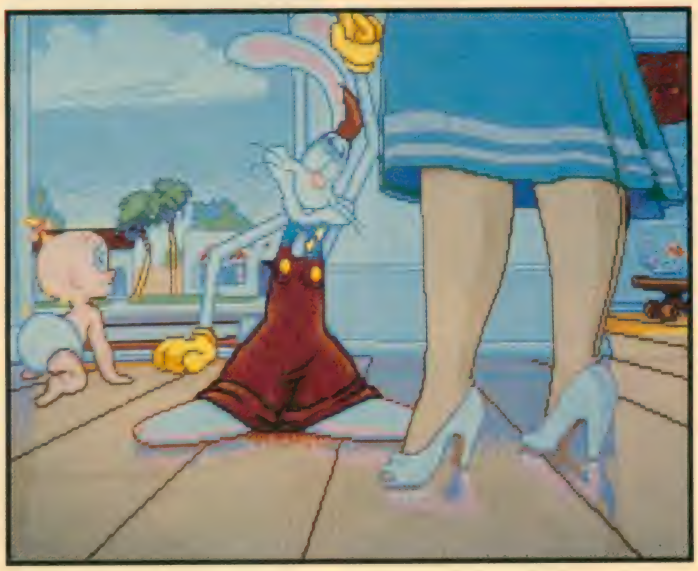


HARE RAISING HAVOC:

Disney's New Animated Interactive Cartoon

SELBY BATEMAN

Mommy's going out shopping, and poor Roger has to play babysitter for the fast-moving Baby Herman.





That fish has really *chomped down on poor Roger! Hmmm...wonder why the fish is so upset?*

Baby Herman has once again slipped away from accident-prone but resilient Roger Rabbit. And unless Roger can escape from the house and make his way across town to find and return Baby Herman before Mother gets home from shopping, it's *"back to the science lab!"* for our favorite furry Toon.

That's the basic premise in **Disney Software**'s new Roger Rabbit PC entertainment package, *Hare Raising Havoc*. But it doesn't begin to describe the unique blend of cartoon mayhem and Rube Goldberg-style puzzles that makes *Hare Raising Havoc* such a groundbreaking piece of fun.

Although this is technically the second Roger Rabbit PC game from Disney, it's the first to really capture the feel of classic Disney animation — the lively sound effects, amazing voice characterizations, and that irrepressible and daffy cartoon magic.

If you're one of those few individuals still unfamiliar with Roger Rabbit, Baby Herman, and the rest of the wackiest backup cast in cartoon history, run immediately

wwwww!!!

"I'm on my way, Baby Herman!"

aaa!!!!

bonk

Zowwwieeeee!!!!



Roger seems to be trapped, and it's up to you to get him out of there to save Baby Herman.

to your favorite home video store and check out "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?" This 1988 motion picture collaboration between Disney Studios (Touchstone Pictures) and Steven Spielberg (Amblin Entertainment) won four Academy Awards, including a Special Achievement Oscar. The movie matter-of-factly mixed together live actors and Toons (cartoon characters) in a one-of-a-kind comedic and technical tour de farce that is already a classic.

Disney's new PC game starts with a save-Baby-Herman plot similar to that seen in the opening frames of the motion picture. Happily, the designers and programmers at Disney have taken the time and the effort to duplicate in amazing detail the mannerisms, movements, and personality of Roger Rabbit to an astonishing degree.

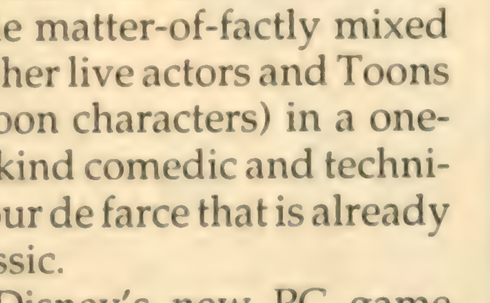
As with any good cartoon, the sounds and voices are almost always at least half the experience. And that's certainly the case with *Hare Raising Havoc*. It's hard to imagine playing the game without hearing Roger's zany comments, his stuttering shrieks, and the thousand-and-one sound effects that add so much humor to the game.



Uh-oh! Roger seems to have hurt his foot. Now, how did that happen?

To be sure, you'll want to have a sound card (Sound Blaster, Tandy sound, and the PS/1 Audio card are supported) or Disney's own Sound Source peripheral unit in order to get the full effect of the voices and sounds.

Once you get over the initial delight of moving Roger around inside a wonderfully drawn set, you can begin to concentrate on getting the rabbit out of the house and back again — with Baby Herman in tow, of course — before Mother returns. It's not easy, especially at first. The players' guidelines from the designers at Disney are simple and effective: Try everything, and try everything repeatedly. Our tests here at Game Player's show that dedicated and talented gamers catch on right away and may buzz through the game in a matter of hours. It can take a lot longer for players unaccustomed to puzzle-solving, but even they will get caught up in the cartoon animation and sound effects.



You've made it to another room, but Roger seems to be worried that you're not moving fast enough.



Mice have sharp teeth. It's better to give them something besides Roger's fingers to chew on.



You'll find the most interesting things inside the fridge — just be sure to watch your step!

You move Roger through a variety of rooms and open areas in which the simplest



Jessica, Roger's curvaceous wife, seems to have stopped by to wish her hubby all the best. Time's wasting, Roger.

household item or backyard tool can suddenly become an instrument of sheer cartoon terror. One wrong move and Roger is flying through the air, banging his head, getting sucked down drains, slipping and tripping on objects, and being twisted like a pretzel.



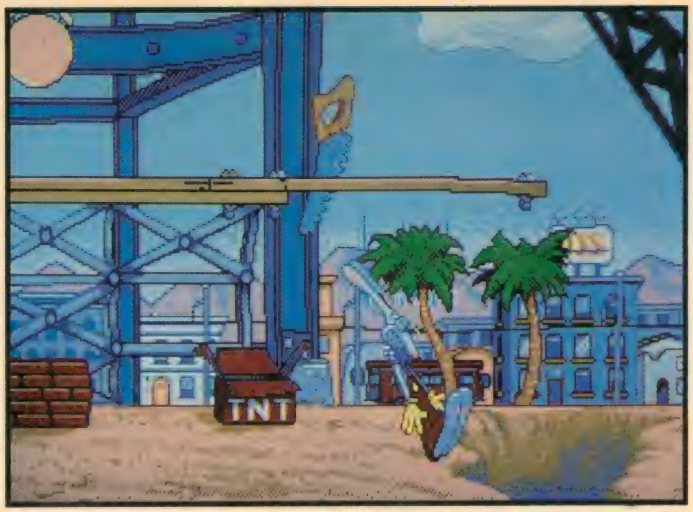
Notice how Roger's eyes seem to bug right out of his head just before that rake handle hits his face?

You don't have to learn any complicated instructions to play any of the sequences in *Hare Raising Havoc*. Using a joystick or the keyboard, simply move Roger left or right, then press a key or a joystick button to get him to perform an action. Fans of the legendary American cartoonist, Rube Goldberg, will very quickly catch onto — and be delighted by — the wacky steps required to keep Roger moving after Baby Herman. Almost every action has a reaction, and the correct combination of movements succeeds in helping Roger get closer to his goal. Complicating matters is the ticking clock that pops up periodically to remind you that there's only 60 minutes (Toon minutes) before Mother returns.



Great back yard, nice weather, steaks on the grill — but what's that dog hanging around for?

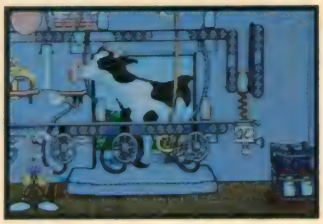
The only major criticism some experienced gamers are likely to have with *Hare Raising Havoc* is that the game may be too short, especially for extremely talented puzzle pros. But most players will find plenty of challenge in the game's seven scenes. Even after you've helped Roger succeed, you'll be trying to beat your previous best time, or surprising your friends with the great animation and delightful sounds.



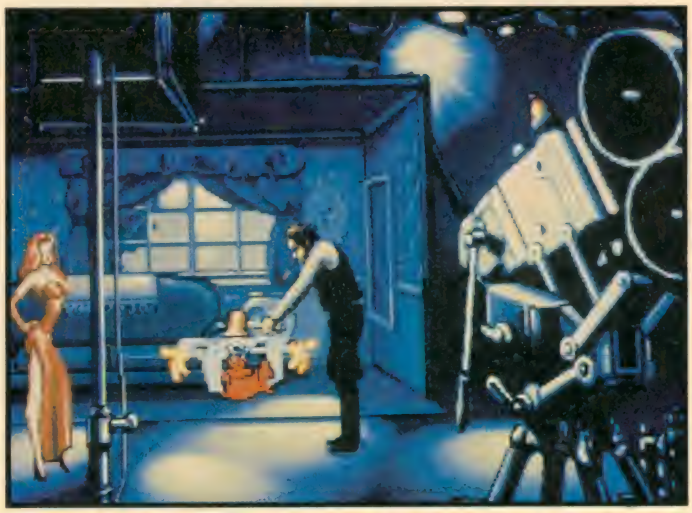
Yeeowww!! Watch out for that hole, Roger!



What's Baby Herman doing atop the Tasty Moo Dairy? That's a mighty big bottle of milk.



What next? Roger seems unsure what to do, so help him make the right mooooooves.



Director Neitsche Darfegnugen uses an anvil-sized mallet to gently correct Roger's acting errors.

To cram all the animation, sound effects, and digitized voices into this game is no small feat. *Hare Raising Havoc* takes up about 5 megabytes on your hard disk, and when you see the game in action, you'll understand why.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Disney's Sound Source, Sound Blaster, Tandy sound, and PS/1 Audio card; joystick optional.

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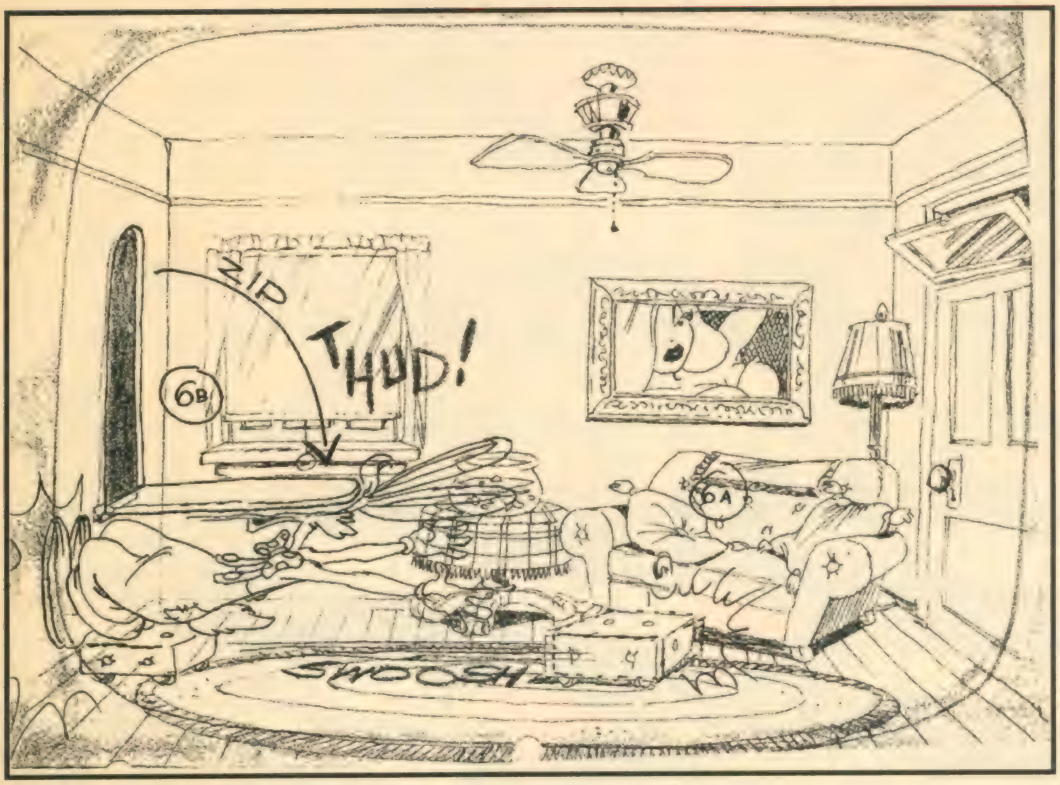
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GAME Player's™ PC STRATEGY GUIDE

LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!



This early storyboard of Roger moving in the first room of the game gives some idea of the attention to detail required to bring this interactive animated puzzle game to the PC screen.



By now, game players are used to hearing the analogy that developing a computer game is similar to creating a Hollywood production. The best PC games have a producer, artists, musicians, composers, programmers, designers, sound people, voice talent — the same types of components that go into making a motion picture.

Hare Raising Havoc is certainly no exception. Producer Sam Palahnuk and a core group of about ten other people worked more than a year to bring this latest Disney game to the PC screen. Moving from initial rough-sketch storyboards, the project unfolded much like a movie or a cartoon. A Hollywood sound effects company was hired to develop the best bangs, whirs, plops, and whizzes. A Hollywood composer created the music. The professional voice actors who were used for the movie, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?," recreated Roger, Baby Herman, and Mommy for the game.

"We went into the studio with a script, and it might take 12 takes to get a line just right," says Palahnuk. "The game and graphics are only half the game."

The 30-year-old Palahnuk, who's been with Disney Studios more than three years now, wanted *Hare Raising Havoc* to look, sound, and feel like vintage Disney work. Having produced the first Roger Rabbit PC game for Disney, Palahnuk felt that a second one should have a number of major changes.

"I wanted to do a Roger Rabbit game that was more fun, easier to play, and more satisfying," he says. He also wanted the character of Roger to be larger in order to help capture the unique feel of the wacky rabbit. "I sat down and came up with the idea for this action-puzzle game, and management liked it." He then approached the outside development team of BlueSky Software in San Diego, people that he'd known personally and whose work he'd been familiar with for years.

The design criteria were simple. First, create a game that was easy to learn and difficult to master.

"We have spent a lot of time focus testing, and in all of the testing we had maybe one person out of 30 who got stuck. There will be a few people who just don't get it," he says. "But for most people there is that moment of *aha!*"

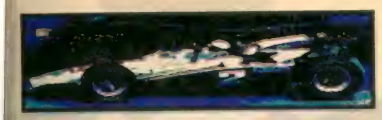
And the second criterion was to have a game filled with unexpected surprises. "People love surprises," says Palahnuk. "People play games for that moment of exhilaration, when they see something that they haven't seen before."

Palahnuk also expects people to get hooked on *Hare Raising Havoc's* unique blend of cartoon animation, puzzle solving, and wonderful sounds and voices.

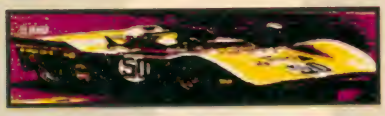
"Some people might say, 'Why doesn't it have *50* rooms?'" he chuckles. "But a candle that burns quite brightly doesn't burn as long as it might."

Nothing would please Palahnuk more than for *Hare Raising Havoc* to be a success, enabling him to get back into the studio for an even bigger and more elaborate visit to Toontown.

GP



MARIO ANDRETTI'S RACING CHALLENGE:







Firing on All Cylinders

LANCE ELKO AND BRIAN CARROLL

Exploring new territory is a hallmark of Mario Andretti's 33-year career. The man widely acknowledged as the greatest race car driver in history has tested nearly every circuit in the world of racing. Andretti has won a national dirt track championship, stock car racing's Daytona 500, endurance sports car racing's Sebring 12 Hours, the Indianapolis 500 (on four occasions), and a Formula One world championship.

His newest territory is the world of PC games. *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* is a brand-new title from **Electronic Arts**, and it's an exciting racing simulation with a wide range of game features.

In creating *Racing Challenge*, Electronic Arts had to tackle a tough problem. The simulation's design was to include not only driving action, but also a player career path similar to Andretti's. This called for a close working relationship with Andretti himself (see "A Conversation with Mario Andretti" following this article). The results are impressive. *Racing Challenge* is a very satisfying simulation with dozens of outstanding features.

FROM RAGS TO RICHES

In *Racing Challenge*, you start out as a rookie driver in need of a sponsor. And you begin exactly as Mario did, driving sprint cars on the dirt track circuit. Once you've proven you can win races in the sprint car series, you can graduate to modifieds, and then to stock cars, prototypes, Formula Ones, and, finally, Indy cars. Success isn't easy. A stock car doesn't handle like a sprint car, and a prototype feels nothing like a modified. Also, the experience you get by driving on a flat dirt track doesn't count for much when you're negotiating a bank on an asphalt track. So before you consider yourself a competitor, you'll have to practice. Fortunately, you can practice with each type of car on any number of tracks.

Car control takes some getting used to. While you need only the basic driving skills — accelerating, braking, and steering — to maneuver around the track, you must also stay focused and keep a sharp eye out at all times. Pay attention to your dashboard readings, the track curves, and, during races, your rearview mirror, where your competitors appear rather quickly and sometimes in bunches.

Once you're ready to run with the pros, you'll need to prove that you can win time and again — it's the only way you can gain sponsors and earn money to buy better cars. Competitions are patterned after real races on real circuits. The Season Schedule gives you the location of each race and the order in which the races run. Just as in real competition, preliminary races are run before the feature race. Here you try to qualify for the feature, or, in the advanced circuits, try to obtain a favorable pole position.

Many of the tracks in *Racing Challenge* — Daytona, Monte Carlo, Pocono, Indianapolis, Le Mans — are familiar even to non-racing fans, and each one simulates its real-life counterpart in size, appearance, track type, banks, and so forth.

Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge offers something to a broad spectrum of PC game players. Simulation buffs get to try out different race cars on a variety of tracks. Action fans who want a stiff challenge can jump right in and compete on the big circuits. Role-playing aficionados get the vicarious thrill of experiencing a complete rags-to-riches career like Andretti's. And racing fans get it all. Like Super Mario himself, *Racing Challenge* looks like a winner.



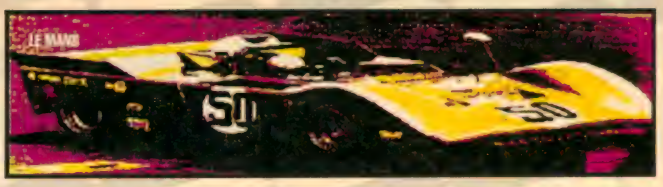
Your career begins rather humbly — like Mario's — with a sprint car. You must win on the dirt track circuit before you can advance to more glamorous cars.



Succeed on the sprint car and modified circuits and you might have enough winnings — $80,000 — to purchase your first stock car.



Racing Challenge *is a big game, but getting around is easy with the menu system.*



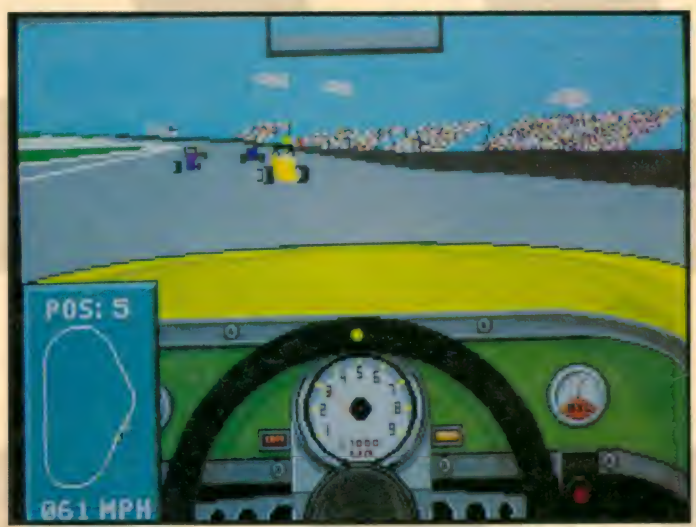


It's a good idea to get an overhead preview of a track before your race. Monte Carlo is one of the prettiest in the game.



Inside a Formula One, you get a view of the straightaway at Monte Carlo.



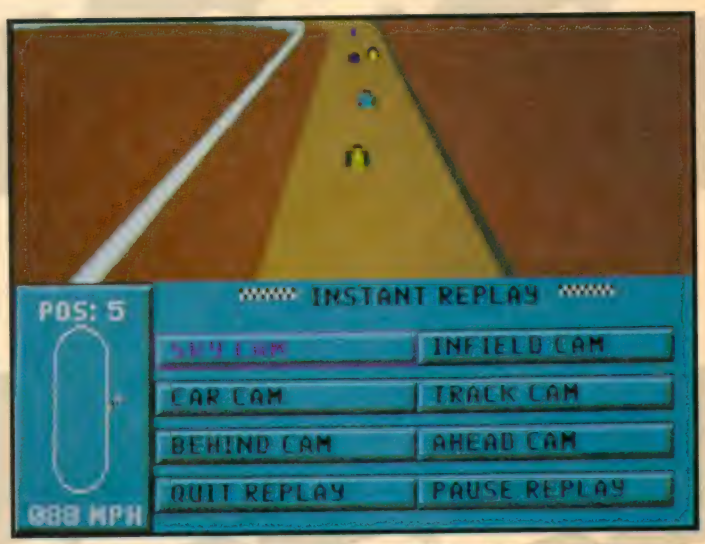


The grandstands at Ascot Park are full as you try to overtake a heavy field of competitors ahead of you. A look in your rearview mirror tells you that no one's approaching — that probably means you're in last place.



The Instant Replay feature lets you choose six different viewing angles — here, you've got a track camera aimed at your Indy car.



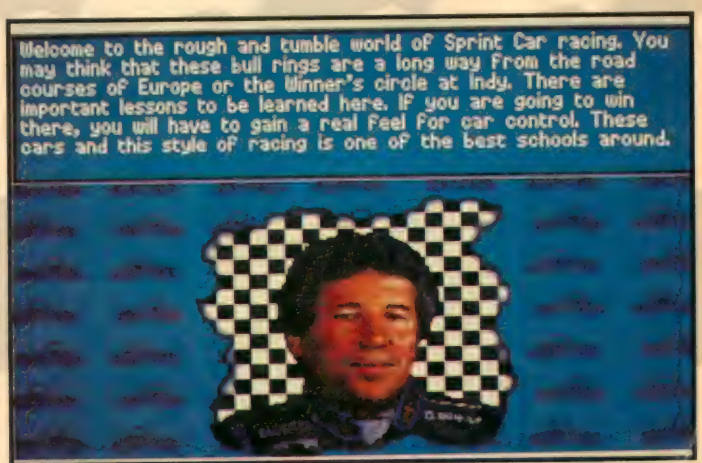


The sky cam over this dirt track shows a sprint car race in progress. If you crash, you won't want to miss a replay from this angle.



After each race, you get a report. In this race, Mario finished sixth.





Before major races, you can get advice from Mario. Since he's raced on all of the tracks in this game, you shouldn't hesitate to hear him out.

A Conversation with Mario Andretti



Talk with Mario Andretti and you'll discover that one of the most difficult things for him is waiting — waiting for a stoplight to turn green, for a feature film to begin, or for an interviewer to finish posing his next question. He's always looking for the next challenge — and he's always in a hurry to move on to it. Andretti's racing career is a case in point. Although he has won more money, pole positions, and road races than any other driver in Indy car history, he continues to strive for more.

We talked to the Montona, Italy, native about his quest, and about his involvement in the creation of *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge*.

GP: How did the project with Electronic Arts come about?
MA: They felt that by combining some of my experience in the field with their know-how in producing simulations, they could come up with something the public might be interested in. We had several meetings along the way to discuss the nuts and bolts of how I do what I do, and how I look at things, so they could determine what their approach should be. I've been amazed at how much they've been able to pick up from our conversations and at their ability to translate that into, say, the behavior of the race cars, for example. My involvement has largely been merely talking, which of course is something I'm very good at.

GP: What was your goal in endorsing and helping to produce the game?
MA: The game is a way to translate what I do into something the average person can enjoy. Auto racing is a very non-participative sport at our level. It's not like professional tennis, where you can watch John McEnroe, for example, and then pick up your racket, run down to the local club and start swinging. You can use basically the same equipment as McEnroe and have something of the same feeling you would if you were playing professionally. You can watch auto racing and be fascinated by it, but other than getting a ticket in the family car on the way home, it's impossible to capture the same feeling that we experience during a race. A game like this one goes a long way towards reproducing that feeling and making it accessible to anyone with a computer. The concentration required on the tracks in the game is the same required out there on the real racetrack. It's amazing to me that this aspect of racing can be duplicated so realistically for the computer.

GP: What pleases you the most about the project?
MA: I've not seen the final product yet, but so far I'm very impressed with the attention to accuracy. At Indianapolis, for example, the game captures a lot of what we see from the cockpit. By that I mean reference points for what's around you. Just like at Indy, when you're coming down the straightaway, you can see the shade from the grandstands and immediately know where you are. In that way, I think the game captures the character of each of the particular events.

GP: What were some of the problems you encountered in this project?
MA: There's not much I can do but talk and try to express some of what I feel as a driver and what I must possess as racing skills. I can talk about what the race car can do. It's up to the game technicians to try to understand the ins and outs of driving. That was sometimes very difficult because, for one thing, I'm not a teacher. I don't profess to be able to even teach for a driving school. I can't give information in those terms. All I can do is talk about the way I look at things. So, it took a while for them [the technicians] to understand me. They had to translate what I feel into something other people can enjoy when playing the game. I've opened myself up as much as I've ever done before on racing. You'll never find that in a library — how I drive, how I apply my skills. Those who play the game will learn something about me and about what it means to race in a way they could never learn by reading.

GP: The game starts players off with dirt-track sprint car racing. Why?
MA: It's what turned me on to racing and got my career started. It's a special art to be able to drive the cars sideways through the corners and to control a car that, for all intents and purposes, is out of control the entire time. It's also a good style to start out with because you can recover. It's a bit more forgiving than, say, racing on high-banked ovals. It requires racers to adjust to forever-changing conditions. You have to be able to predict what the track is going to be like. It can be like driving in a hard rainstorm or driving on a frozen lake. I've learned some things on the dirt track that have helped in Formula One racing, like how the cars handle, for example, and how to apply traction out of a corner. It's where I learned to be a throttle artist, meaning when to use the gas to go forward and not go all over the track. It's obviously not just hitting the gas and screaming around the track.

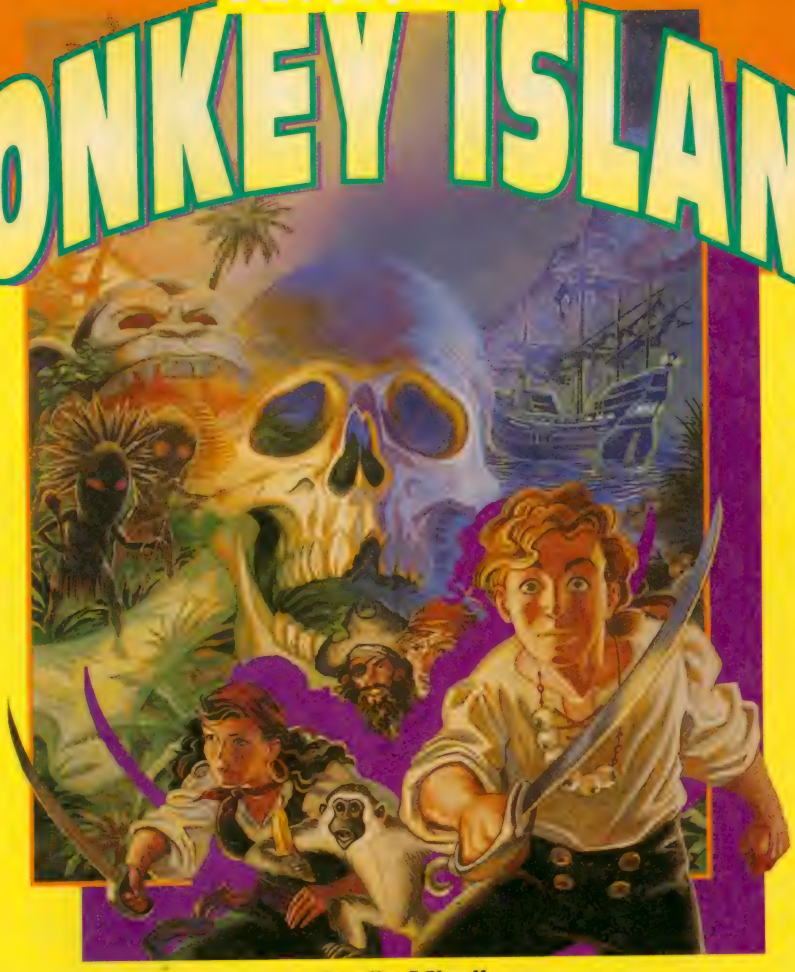
GP: *Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge* reflects your career by encompassing many styles of racing. Was that important to you?
MA: The most important thing in my career, the most valuable thing to me, has been my versatility. There are many different categories of auto racing — stock, Indy, and on and on. I've been curious and lucky enough to experiment in all of those areas. And my goal has always been not just to compete but to win in all of those different types of racing. I've been fortunate in achieving that goal. We wanted the game to reflect that versatility. When you play the game, you learn what adjustments to make as you race the various styles. You can't race on a dirt track the same way you would on a super speedway. This game illustrates that, I think, very well. It's easier to concentrate on one aspect of racing, but to be good at all of them is quite a trick.

GP: You never seem satisfied with what you've achieved. After so many years racing and winning, how do you stay motivated?
MA: The feeling you get from winning, from doing what you have to do to pull off a victory, is something you can never get enough of. Taking a car to the edge without falling off is kind of an addictive challenge, and I guess I'm still hooked. Does pride enter into it? Damn sure it does.

GP: Can you give us an example of a commonly held belief about racing that just isn't true?
MA: Probably the myth laymen come up with most often, what very few people realize, is how slowly things actually happen during races. It's not as super-quick as people think. Even in the computer game, when you realize you have cars around you, you also realize that they're going as fast as you are. That slows the action down because one car is relative to another. Believe it or not, I don't have to have the lightning-quick reflexes of a ping-pong player in the cockpit. In fact, a big no-no in this business is overreacting, because the key in crisis is not to overreact and to hold your emotions. Lightning-quick reflexes exerted in this business get you killed.

GP

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND



Leslie Mizell

Have you always secretly wanted to swash your buckles? Do you buy a certain pirate-endorsed cereal just for the nifty decoder rings and Jolly Roger patches? Congratulations! You're a buccaneer in the making. And *The Secret of Monkey Island* might just finish your training.

In this new **Lucasfilm** interactive graphic adventure, you're young Guy Threepwood, a pirate wannabe. You've chosen the marauders of Melee Island to be your mentors. But there's one catch — none of these pirates is willing to sail the high seas, much less pillage or loot. They're all scared stiff of a stiff — the ghost-pirate LeChuck, whose spirited ship still rides the waves of the Caribbean. So the pirates swill grog in the local tavern while the treasures of the world go un-plundered, the armadas of the seas go un-molested, and the lasses of the country go un-kissed.

Find out about LeChuck by talking to the drunken pirates, then chat with the important-looking pirates in the back room to learn what tasks you must complete before the scalawags will take you under their wing. The three trials they assign — becoming a master swordsman, discovering the lost treasure of Melee Island, and stealing the Idol of Many Hands from the Governor's Mansion — must be completed before you can leave the island.

No sooner do you fulfill your tasks than you find that every pirate on the island has flown the coop. LeChuck is on the rampage again, and this time he's kidnapped lovely Elaine, the only governor who makes your heart beat faster.

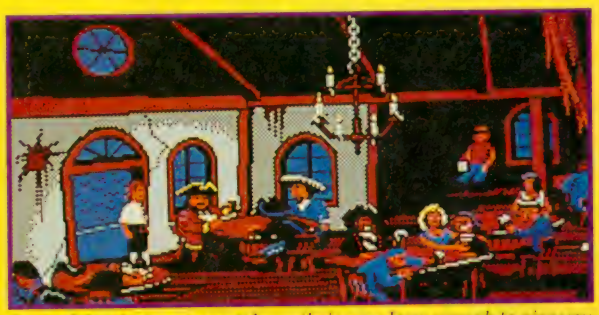
You must scramble to buy a ship, assemble a crew, and follow LeChuck to Monkey Island. Your goal on that isle is to find the key to the Monkey Head Temple. Somewhere in the caverns beneath the temple is LeChuck's ghost ship — and your one chance to stop LeChuck from marrying Elaine.

Designed by Ron Gilbert, who introduced players to the wacky worlds of *Maniac Mansion* and *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, *Monkey Island* keeps the outrageous sense of humor of those games, but is more accessible to players. Not only do events progress in a more logical sequence, but Gilbert has added the dialogue choices first found in Lucasfilm's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* to the company's familiar "point-and-click" interface. The result is a faster-moving game with more action, less curser-moving — and if you combine that smoother game with the 256-color version soon to be available, you've got the best Lucasfilm game ever.

Monkey Island also continues to reward those people who have played other Lucasfilm games by lacing the action with references to *Loom* and *Indiana Jones* (and, of course, Chuck, that perennial Lucasfilm character). It's truly a perfect family game of nonstop fun: All that's required is a knowledge of what to do when you're handed a rubber chicken with a pulley in the middle.

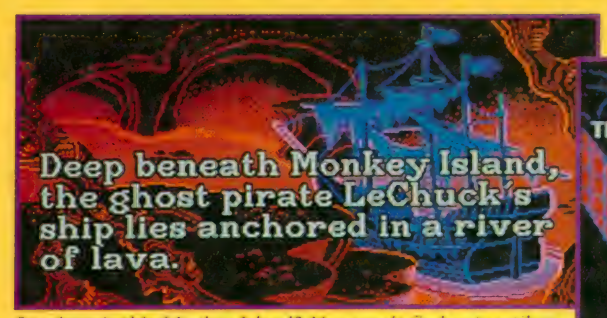


The lookout of Melee Island is blind as a bat, so don't rely on him for information regarding LeChuck's ghost ship.



Some of the pirates may put down their grog long enough to give you some plot background, but it's the important-looking pirates in the back room who'll get you started on your life of piracy.

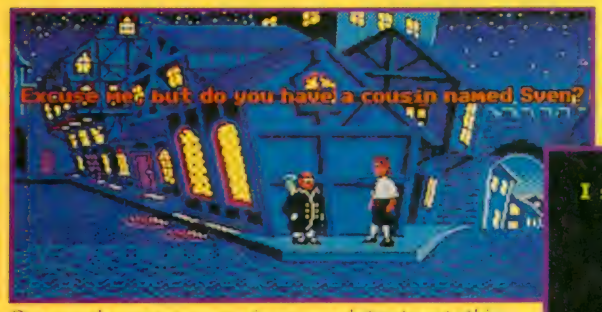
Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.



So where is this Monkey Island? You won't find out until much later in the game.



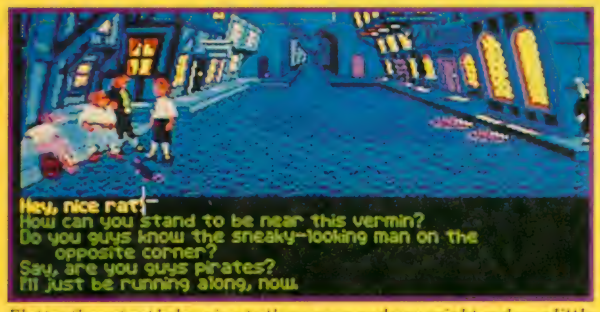
At least LeChuck has gotten his just desserts. Unfortunately, Hell hasn't improved his disposition — he's ready for revenge, and his plans include Governor Marley.



Once you have some money in your pocket, return to this citizen of Melee and purchase a map from him. Don't worry if you don't know Sven — your barber is close enough.



The fortuneteller won't give you much information, but you can pick up a useful item in her shop. Those rubber chickens seem to be pretty popular — and there's one in here you can pick up for free.



Flatter the pet rat belonging to these guys and you might end up a little richer than you were before. Invest the money in something for your halitosis — and that of the pirates around you.



The sole occupant of the Melee jail has nothing to do but gossip — but you'd better have a breath mint if you want to chat with him. His rat-flavored breath is fierce.



Once you've explored the town of Melee, you can investigate the rest of the island. There's still plenty of activity on the paths after sunset.



You must bribe the troll with something frivolous before he'll let you cross the bridge. Mystery readers shouldn't have any trouble coming up with the right "false clue" to give him.



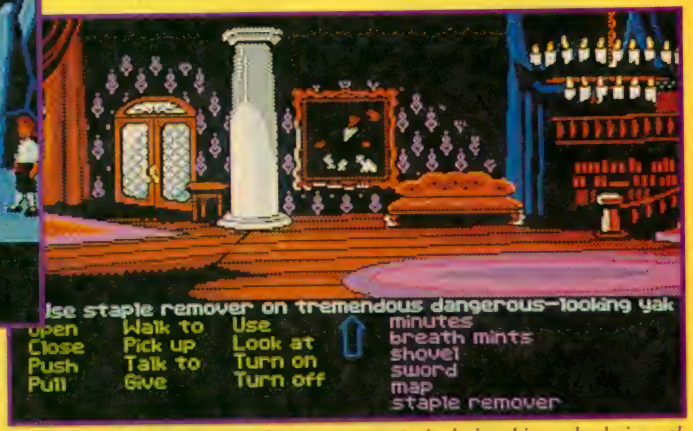
You can pick up some money by taking a risky job with the circus. The Fettucini Brothers pay their human cannonballs well, but you'd better have a makeshift helmet if you're to survive your short, memorable trip.



Meathook has been a near-hermit ever since LeChuck ruined the tourist industry. He'd probably jump at the chance to destroy LeChuck — and he could keep everyone amused with his neat tatoo trick.



If you listened carefully to the important-looking pirates, then you should have no trouble getting past the piranha poodles. But if you didn't....



Monkey Island *may be the first game ever to include a big, ugly, hairy yak wearing wax lips. It's too bad that, along with the other interesting inhabitants of the Governor's Mansion, you never get to see it.*



How did a woman this beautiful get into politics? The sight of lovely Governor Marley renders you practically speechless. You might want to rely on your non-conversational skills to impress her.



As in all good treasure hunts, X marks the spot. But as the Melee Island Chamber of Commerce points out, you should leave a little treasure for the other would-be pirates.



Smirk not only teaches you swordsmanship skills, but he also reveals the key to all good pirate fencing matches — a good insult.



After you've studied with Smirk, practice your new skills on the pirates who roam Melee Island. You won't be ready to face the master swordsman until you have an answer for every insult.



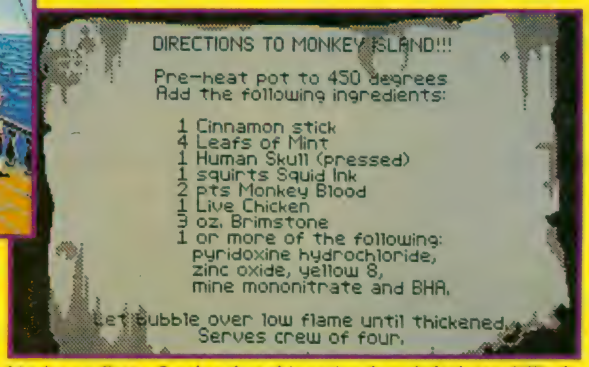
Carla's barbs are slightly different than the average buccaneer's — but with a little imagination, you should find a properly biting reply among your list.



Even at Stan's cut-rate prices, you won't have enough money for a ship until you secure a letter of credit from the shopkeeper in town.



You've barely gotten your feet wet when your scurrilous crew turns mutinous. It looks as if your ship isn't going to Monkey Island unless you figure out a way to get there.



You're no Betty Crocker, but this recipe doesn't look too difficult. Best of all, the ingredients all seem to be readily available — in one form or another.



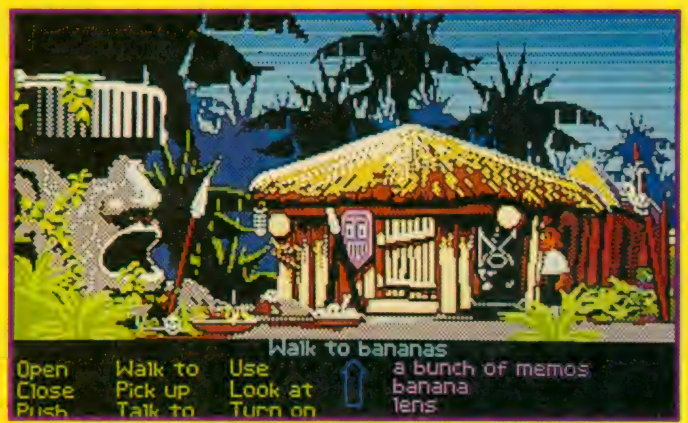
There's got to be an easier way to travel! Whatever happened to little wooden rowboats?



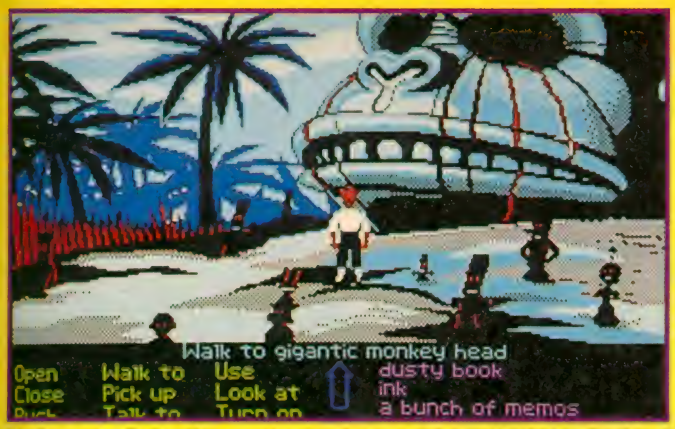
Since Monkey Island is larger than Melee Island, it's more difficult to explore. Be careful — unfriendly fowl seem to be waiting for you to get lost.



Everything you need to blow up the dam can be found in the fort near the volcano. Dropping the gunpowder on the dam is the easy part — now what do you have that could ignite the powder?



You need those bananas, but the fruit is all-too-fiercely guarded by the fine young cannibals of Monkey Island. You'd better make friends with them if you don't want to end up as tonight's main course.



Maybe you can find an item worthy of trade on a quick jaunt to the Monkey Head Temple. Since there's not much of a choice, your decision shouldn't be too difficult.



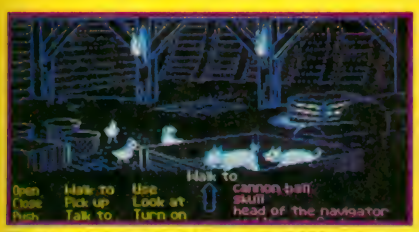
The caverns underneath Monkey Head are full of illusions, so it helps to have a trained professional with you. Even a long-dead navigator is better than nothing.



Follow the navigator's directions carefully, and don't head anywhere if he hasn't given his nod of approval.



If you follow the navigator's instructions, you'll find LeChuck's ghost ship in record time. But you'd have to be practically invisible to search the ship without being noticed.



The cannibals' valuable root is hidden in the ghostly livestock room. Grab the root quickly — and try not to notice the animals' disgusting eating habits.





Great! You returned the root to the cannibals and got some of their exorcism potion, only to find out you're too late to stop the ship from sailing back to Melee Island.



A spritz of potion, and it's bye-bye ghost. Now hurry up and get to the church on time.



You're hot on the trail of LeChuck. But will you be in time to stop his wedding to your beloved Elaine?

Read the Editor's Notes in this issue for information on *The Secret of Monkey Island* Treasure Hunt!



KIDS AND COMPUTERS

PC Games That Make Learning Fun

Leslie Eiser



Educational software isn't boring anymore — and there are a host of new packages that prove it. These games, which span all age groups, go far beyond the humdrum practice drills from the early days of educational computing. So far, in fact, that kids won't even know they're learning.

We all know exactly how it happens. You sit down in front of the computer for a quick look at the latest game and suddenly there's a tug on your sleeve. "Hey, can I help you play...please?"

Sound familiar? You've just been hit by a bad case of Computer Interruptus, one of the most common user ailments. This debilitating infirmity is frequently found in every household with at least one computer and one child under the age of 12. But now you and your family need suffer no longer. There are games for the younger set that feature graphics as thrilling as the latest flight simulator (if you happen to be 7), sound effects that will keep you playing the game just to hear them again (if you happen to like Mickey Mouse), and music so good even you will want to sing along. Best of all, these games aren't just fun — they're educational.

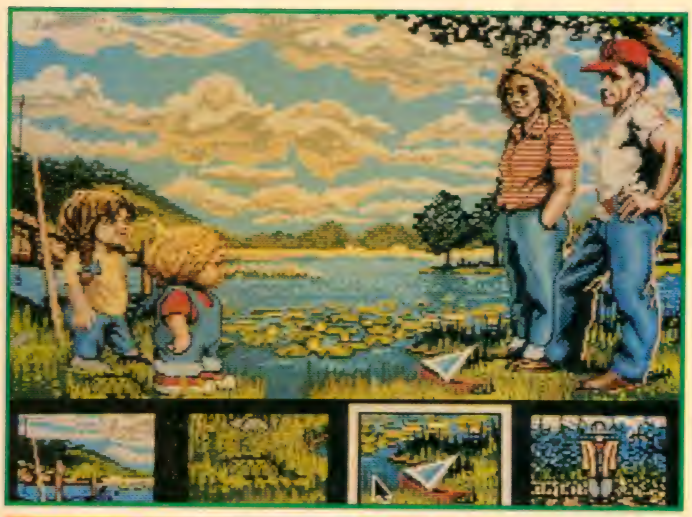


YOUNGER PRESCHOOLERS

To keep younger preschoolers entertained, look for programs that offer stunning graphics, little or no keyboard input, and captivating storylines. Bright color schemes that take advantage of EGA/VGA graphics and stimulating sound effects using digitized voices should complete the package.

Don't compromise on quality. A bored child won't complain, he'll just turn away from the computer. "No word" programs like *Katie's Farm* and *McGee at the Fun Fair*, from **Lawrence Productions**, are utterly captivating to children in the 2- to 5-year-old range. Designed to be super simple to use, each of these programs lets your youngster direct the action by using a mouse or pressing an arrow key and pushing Enter. Seen through a child's eyes, McGee and Katie live in worlds filled with surprising things. Designed to encourage conversation and a sense of wonder, these programs educate by experience, not by drill and practice.

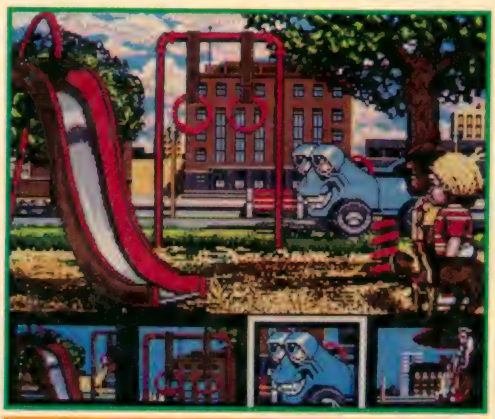
Each program in the McGee series uses the same "no word" interface with a different storyline to both entertain and educate. In *Katie's Farm*, McGee goes to



Katie's Farm

visit his cousin in the country. The pair explore the farm, feeding the horse, gathering eggs in the chicken house, and playing near the pond. *McGee at the Fun Fair* takes a look at one small aspect of life in the big city. In the park near McGee's house, there's a Fun Fair, and McGee and his friend Tony decide to go. After listening to the musicians and admiring the juggler, McGee and Tony can play on familiar pieces of park equipment like a slide and monkey bars. When they get tired of playing, they can stop at the ice-cream vendor for a quick bite or get a drink at the water fountain.

What makes each of these programs educational? Random events, reliable repetition, adorable sound effects, and attractive graphics combine to make using either *Katie's Farm* or *McGee at the Fun Fair* spellbinding for young children. Rather than focusing on direct educational content like letter recognition, programs like these give the very young user a sense of control while providing opportunities for family discussion.



McGee at the Fun Fair

By asking children to predict what balloon animal the clown will make this time, you are helping them learn to predict actions based on past experience. By giving them the opportunity to make all the decisions, you encourage their sense of themselves, making them more independent. Put several children in front of the computer and you'll encourage cooperative social behavior in a positive environment. Since nobody loses, and there are no wrong answers, you give every child the opportunity to succeed.



OLDER PRESCHOOLERS

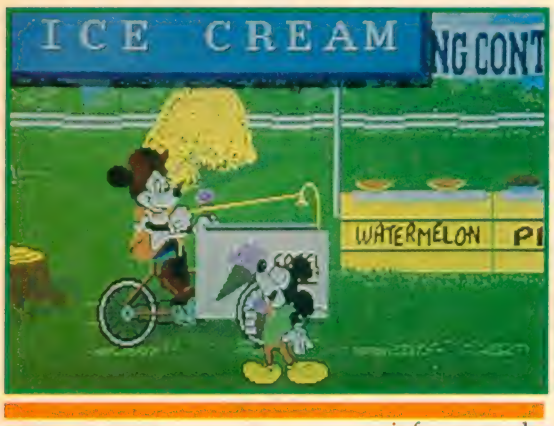
If your children are old enough to find most of the letters and numbers on the keyboard, they're ready to play either of two excellent programs from **Disney Software**, *Mickey's ABC's: A Day at the Fair* and *Mickey's 123's: The Big Surprise Party*. Featuring most of the well-known Disney cartoon characters, these programs use absolutely wonderful graphics (the CGA version is super, and the VGA images are sure to impress your friends) and some hilarious animated sequences. Coupled with the reasonably priced Disney Sound Source and the resulting excellent sound effects and voices, these programs are fun to use, astonishingly entertaining, and even educational.



Mickey's 123's: The Big Surprise Party

In *Mickey's 123's*, Mickey starts the game by asking for help in organizing a surprise party for one of his friends. Using only the number keys, your youngster will decide who to invite, get the invitations delivered, shop for the food and party decorations at Goofy's store (no money

needed), and even create a magical toy surprise. When everything is ready, it's lights out until the surprise guest arrives. After dinner everyone goes home, and Mickey gets ready to organize another party for a different friend. Primarily designed to reinforce number recognition skills, *Mickey's 123's* does more. It provides a social setting for some rather interesting number activities, and provides very immediate feedback to every key press. The helpful Parent's Guide makes the program even more educational by providing lots of detailed suggestions for improving your child's ability to recognize numbers.



Mickey's ABC's: A Day at the Fair

Press any alphabet key in *Mickey's ABC's* and something exciting is sure to happen. Designed to help children learn the alphabet, this program rewards every key press with an animated sequence, from pie and watermelon-eating contests to sack races and free ice-cream cones. There's even a television show (press "T" when Mickey is home) starring Donald and Goofy.

As with the McGee series, occasional random events keep kids pressing the keys while learning more and more about the relationships between letters, words, and actions. To make sure kids remember which letter they pressed and the word to which it corresponds, this information is displayed on the screen in large letters. Eight pages of detailed advice in the accompanying Parent's Guide will help you improve your child's learning experience with the program.

While both *Mickey's 123's* and *Mickey's ABC's* will produce sound through your computer's internal speakers, the quality is quite poor. To really hear the music and listen in on the conversations between Mickey and his friends, you'll need to use the Disney Sound Source. Plug this external box into your parallel printer port and listen to the programs come alive. Detailed instructions for using the programs are given orally, and in *Mickey's ABC's* a female voice says the name of every letter as it is pressed and clearly pronounces every corresponding word. Given the importance of audio feedback when working with young learners, getting the Sound Source isn't just a good idea — it can make the difference between learning something and just playing a game.

MIDDLE-AGE KIDS

Getting this hard-to-figure "middle-aged" group (ages 7 to 9) to sit down is easy -- provided you give them lots of fast action, an exciting storyline, and significant rewards for achievement. The games for quick wits and even quicker fingers are *Treasure Mountain*, *Midnight Rescue*, and *Number Munchers*. Far too much fun to be classified as purely educational, these games clearly demonstrate that learning can be just as close as the nearest computer.



Number Munchers

Staying alive long enough to watch the cartoon reward at the end of three rounds of **MECC**'s *Number Munchers* is pretty tough, but that's what makes this game fun. Played on a 4 x 6 grid, this is a math game with a difference. Winning a round consists of moving an animated number muncher around the board, directing him to eat only the correct answers to a math problem posed at the top of the screen. Unfortunately, the task is complicated by the presence of mischievous Troggles, who change answers indiscriminately and occasionally eat the number muncher. Different levels of play and a high-score table keep the competition keen. A new obstacle is added when a level is completed, and the number of Troggles moving around the grid increases dramatically. High scorers will need good math skills and eyes at the sides of their heads.

Designed to be used in school as well as at home, this program provides parent-controlled options that allow the program to be used over a very wide range of ability levels.

Treasure Mountain, one of the Super Solvers Series packages from **The Learning Company**, is a wonderful game for kids just starting to



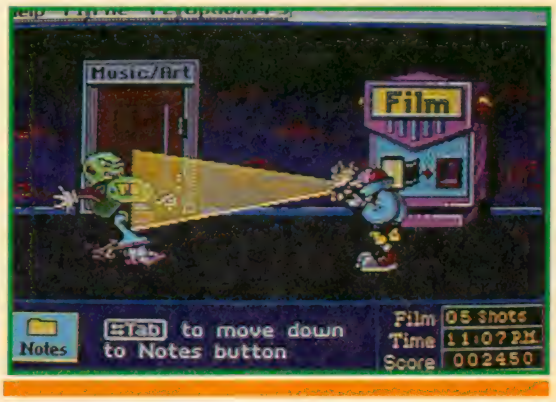
Treasure Mountain

read. The goal of this game is for players to make their way through the levels on *Treasure Mountain* in an effort to frustrate archfiend Morty Maxwell. They'll have to start by capturing some of the elves that live on the mountain. Each trapped elf gives the player a gold coin, or poses a word puzzle. Correct solutions earn clue words, and clue words have to be used to locate the hidden treasures.

Like any good arcade game, there are lots of different levels to master. Like any good educational game, the word puzzles are carefully sequenced so that youngsters having trouble at one level don't suddenly find themselves trying to solve problems way too difficult for them. Well crafted, and very entertaining to play, this is a perfect solution to Computer Interruptus for the 5- to 9-year-old set.

FOR GOOD READERS, 7 AND UP

Older kids need more strenuous reading activities, but the same stimulating and entertaining packaging. To get both into one box is tough, but *Midnight Rescue*, another Super Solvers entree from The Learning Company, does a great job of challenging kids both from an educational and an arcade point of view. Morty Maxwell, the dean of mischief and skulduggery, is threatening to make the school invisible if your youngster doesn't stop him. The job will require some fast keyboard work and pretty good reading skills. Fortunately, the reading content section isn't timed, and kids can catch their breath while thinking about the solutions. Once back in the halls of the school, however, anything goes. Variable levels of difficulty, point scores, and increasing speed keep the action going, despite the rather clear-cut educational content.



Midnight Rescue and *Challenge of the Ancient Empires!*



AN ALTERNATIVE TO NINTENDO

Looking for something besides Nintendo for those 9- to 13-year-old kids in your house? Want something educational as well as entertaining? *Challenge of the Ancient Empires!* — also from The Learning Company — is enough of a challenge to keep even the most proficient Nintendo user occupied for hours. And you can be sure that kids are getting more than just nimble fingers out of the time they spend in front of the computer.

Multiple levels, repeatable caverns, creepy monsters, incredible graphics, fantastic sound even without a sound card, and a keyboard interface that only a nine-year-old could love combine to make *Challenge of the Ancient Empires!* the closest thing to an arcade game the educational software market has produced. From bouncing off the walls in Turbo Tennies to shooting light beams at trick triggers hidden in the most unusual places, this is a program that looks, sounds, and even acts like a Nintendo game. But there's more to education than meets the eye, and *Ancient Empires* offers young users a series of mind puzzles that may very well challenge their adult helpers. Trying to figure out how to open a four-way door using three switches is a pretty stiff task. Doing it while you're fending off cave creatures is enough to send an adult back quickly to *Wing Commander*. Your kids are going to love figuring out the puzzles. If you ask nicely, they might even teach you how to use the Turbo Tennies.



MINIMUMS, MAXIMUMS, AND NOTHING IN BETWEEN

If you are serious about convincing your children that educational games can be fun, be prepared to add some fairly adult peripherals. Although all the programs reviewed here will run on MS-DOS computers with one floppy disk drive, CGA monitors, and internal speakers, prepare to be disappointed with the results on that type of hardware. To get the full effect, you're going to need a hard drive, a sound board, and EGA/VGA graphics. Since most new games for adults utilize the most advanced graphics and sound hardware available, you've got double the reason to upgrade your system.

There's no longer any reason to put up with Computer Interruptus at your house. Get the kids a game of their own to play, and sit back. Who knows—they might even let you help.

GP

SOFTWARE SOURCES

KATIE'S FARM & MCGEE AT THE FUN FAIR

Lawrence Productions
1800 South 35th Street
Galesburg, MI 49053-9687
1-800-421-4157

640K memory required; supports VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Sound Blaster, Covox Speech Thing, and Tandy Digital Sound

MICKEY'S 123'S: THE BIG SURPRISE PARTY & MICKEY'S ABC'S: A DAY AT THE FAIR

Walt Disney Computer Software
500 S. Buena Vista Street
Burbank, CA 91521
(818) 567-5360

512K memory required; supports EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports The Sound Source

NUMBER MUNCHERS

MECC
3490 Lexington Avenue North
St. Paul, MN 55126
1-800-228-3504 or (612) 481-3500

512K memory required; supports VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics

TREASURE MOUNTAIN, MIDNIGHT RESCUE & CHALLENGE OF THE ANCIENT EMPIRES!

The Learning Company
6493 Kaiser Drive
Fremont, CA 94555
1-800-852-2255

512K memory required; supports VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Ad Lib and Sound Blaster sound boards

SIM CITY

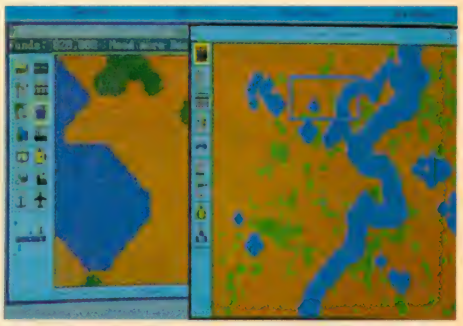
Few computer games have attracted more attention than *Sim* (for "simulated") *City*. In its Macintosh, Amiga, and Commodore-64 versions, the game has addicted thousands, has earned a rave review in *Newsweek*, and has been adopted for classroom use.

The PC version was slow to arrive, but worth the wait. *Sim City* combines the strategy of a war game, the player-megalomania of a role-playing game, and the civics of a shelf of textbooks.

As mayor of a self-created city, you start with a few houses. In a few decades of game time, you have a bustling city. In a century, it's a metropolis complete with crime, pollution, urban blight, and unemployment.

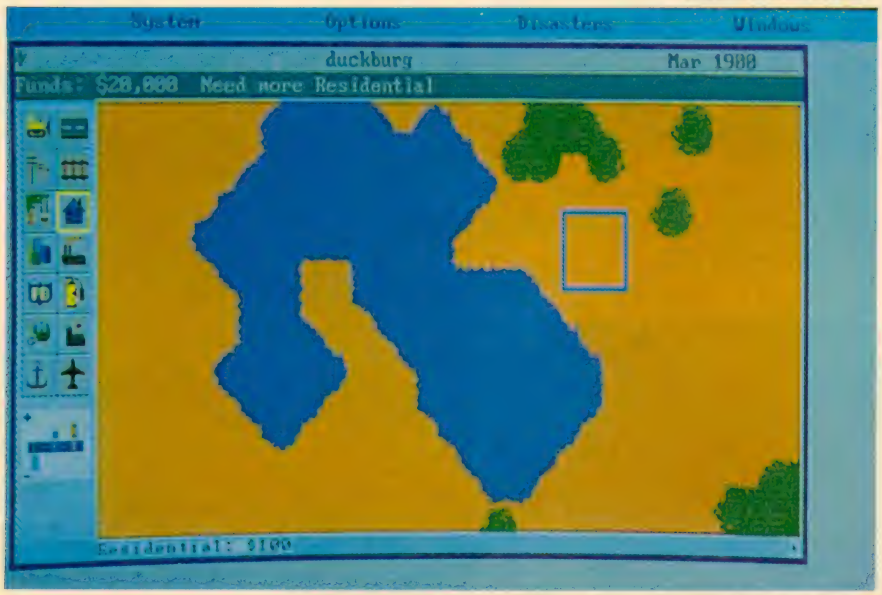
You'll have to tax, plan, engineer, renovate, and zone the land to keep your city a viable economic entity. But don't neglect the quality of life of your Sims ("simulated inhabitants"). You must achieve a healthy balance between residential, commercial, and industrial development.

If you've ever thought you could run your city better than City Hall, you can finally put your mouse where your mouth is. You'll see that – just as in real life – the stategies that form Utopias on paper never work out that way.



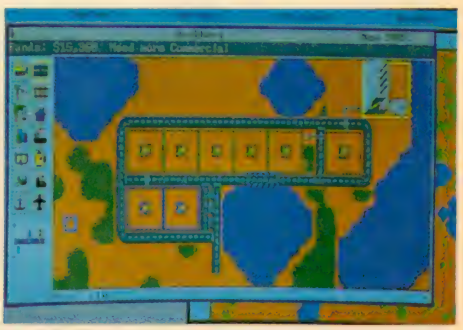
In the Maps Window, you can see 100 square miles of terrain. This is where you sketch out the broad design of your dream city.

Maxis Software



EGA screens shown

You begin with virgin wilderness. The area inside the cursor represents the amount of development you can accomplish with one click of the mouse — about one square block's worth. Normally you'll start with residential zoning.



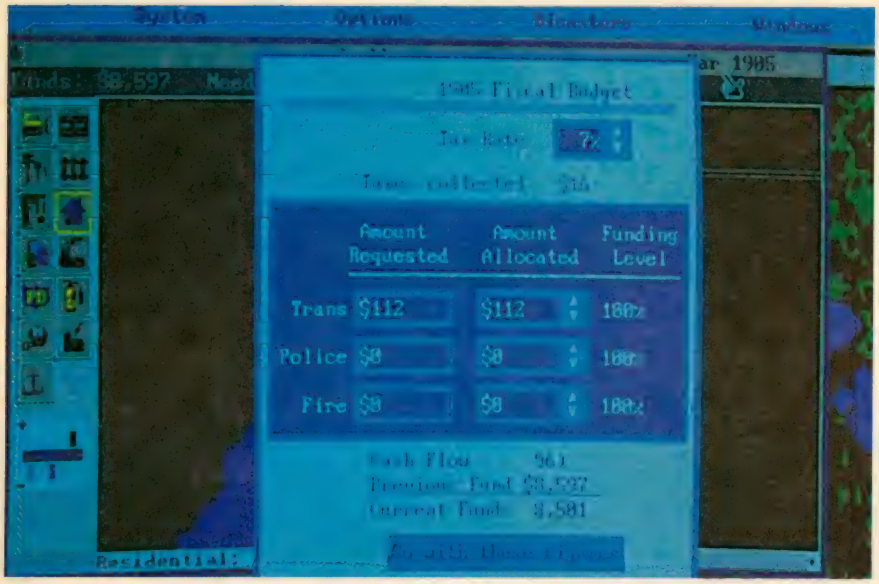
Once you have settlers, you'll need roads. Place them in a logical grid and remember — it's cheaper to plan intelligently from the start than to lay roads through developed areas later on.



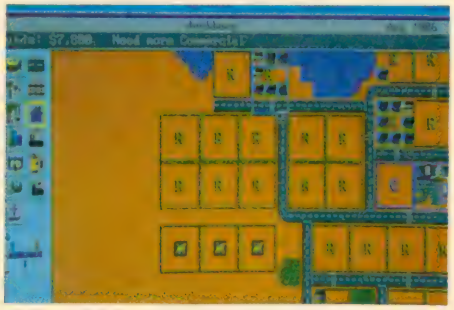
A power plant should be your first utility. Coal or nuclear? *You're* the mayor — you decide. Coal is less efficient (and it pollutes), but a nuclear accident is a real possibility in Sim City.

HINT You'll constantly receive little messages from your Sims ("Need more industry!" or "Need a fire station!", for example). Generally speaking, pay heed to this *vox populi*, but sometimes you'll have to ignore the clamor for a while. If you're constructing a new mass transit system and the Sims start griping for more police stations, you can ignore them. Better mass transit can foster more growth, more tax revenues, more money to buy police stations — *and* a few parks.

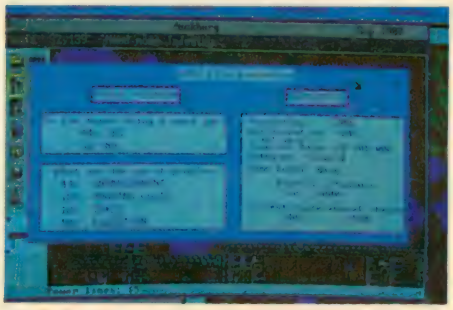
HINT Once you've created your Utopia (low pollution, low crime, good transportation, and a high rating for yourself in the polls) don't become complacent. After a realistic period of game-time, many urban areas begin to decay. The longer you put off urban renewal, the faster the rot sets in. A good mayor plans ahead.



You'll have to establish a fiscal-year budget every 12 months. If your transportation department doesn't get 100 percent of its requested funds, your road system will start to disintegrate before your eyes.



Don't neglect hooking up each new zone to the power grid. A flashing lightning bolt will remind you, and no development will take place in a zone until it's connected.



Check your polls frequently. Unemployment too high? Put in more industry to give your little Sims some jobs.

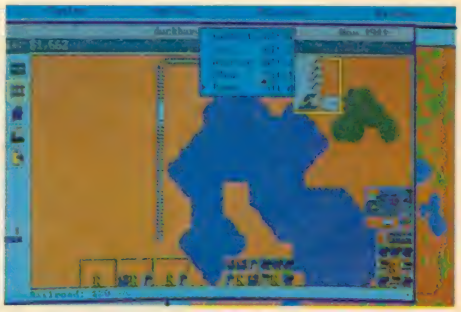


Don't be surprised when houses suddenly appear on vacant lots and cars begin clogging the roads. *You* do the zoning, but the Sims themselves do the building, commuting, and living.

HINT Life in *Sim City* is periodically threatened by disasters: plane crashes, floods, tornadoes — even monsters. If you choose the "monster" option, an animated Godzilla rises from the nearest body of water and stomps your industrial zones into mush. Few players will be able to resist triggering these various calamities just to see what happens. The challenge, however, lies in how you and your Sims *respond* to the disaster. A good mayor will rebuild things better than they were before.



The City Form window shows you the big picture — how your city is sprawling all over the map and what areas of undeveloped land still remain.



Mass transit systems (symbolized by rails) are vital to growth, but very costly to maintain. Don't overbuild unless you can pay for the upkeep.

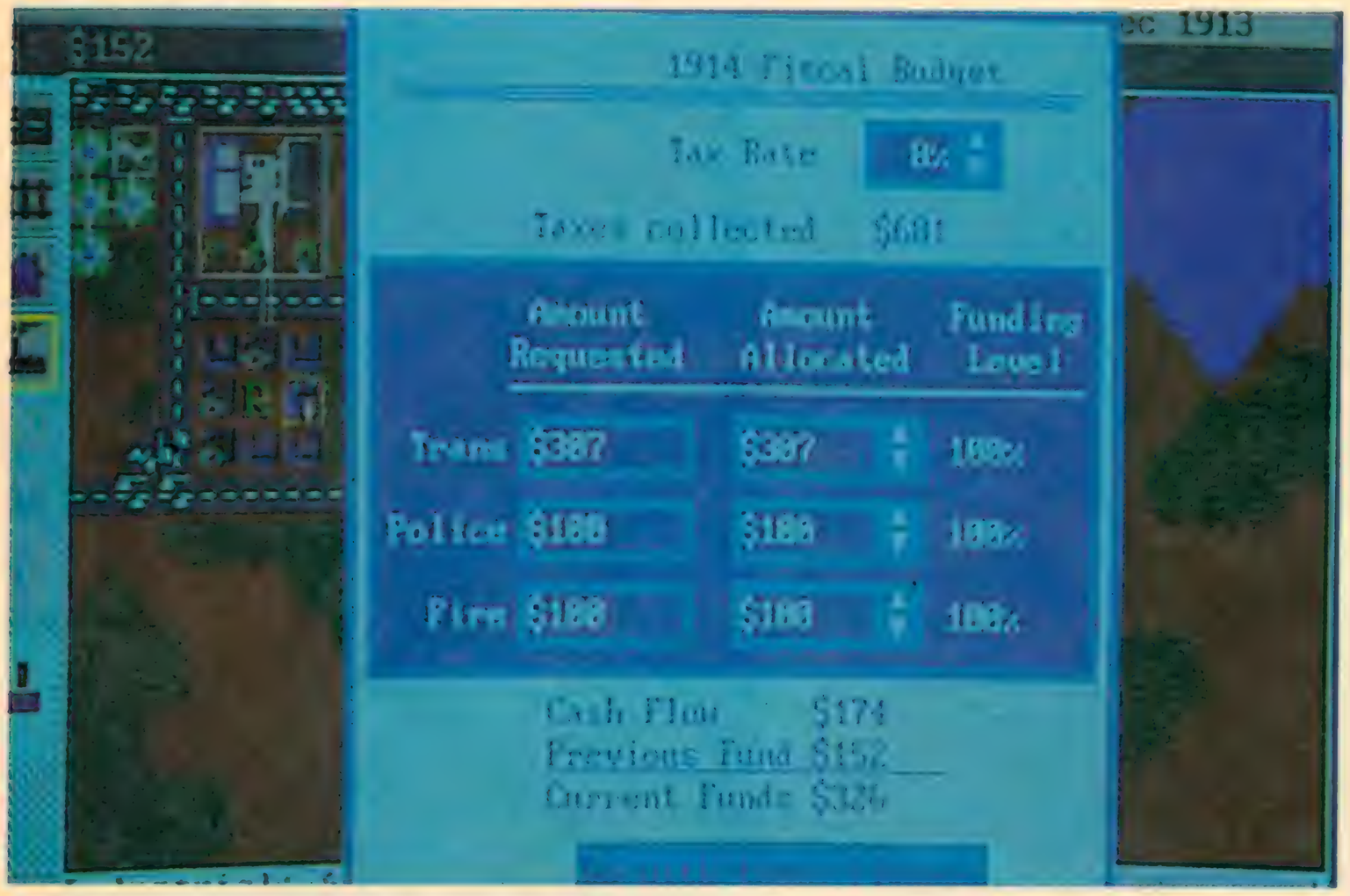


When crime statistics get high, put in a police station. And remember that you'll have to budget for the boys in blue from now on.

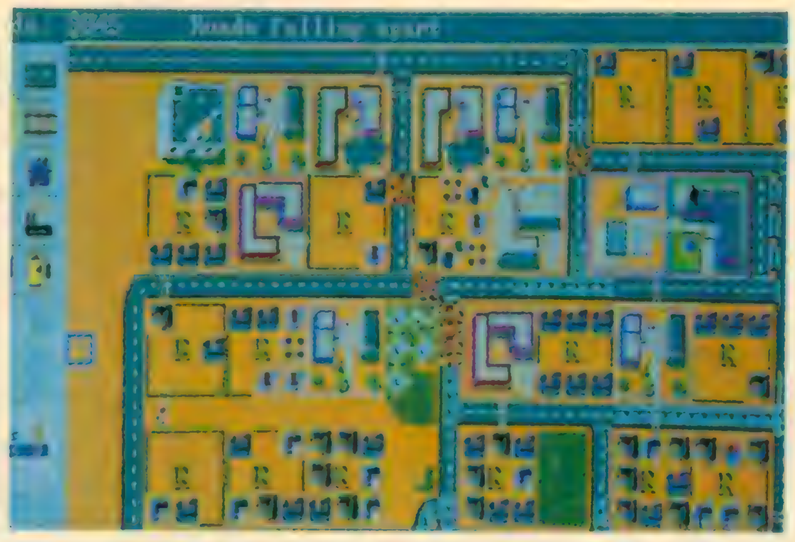


This map shows you at a glance the pattern of property values. This is useful information when you're planning budgets and future development.

HINT Once you've created a few fantasy cities, try one of the disaster scenarios, which use models of real cities and real (or potentially real) events. Three of the more apocalyptic ones are the drowning of Rio de Janeiro (thanks to the greenhouse effect and melting polar ice caps) in 2047; the fire bombing of Hamburg, Germany, in 1944; and the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. To suffer through such calamities, and then to make your city rise, phoenix-like, from its own ashes, is an exalting experience.



As your city's infrastructure becomes more complex, you'll inevitably have to raise taxes. At ten percent and above the Sims will howl, but hey, do they want a fire department or not?



If you don't allocate enough funds to the transportation department, you'll soon see enormous potholes appearing in your highways.



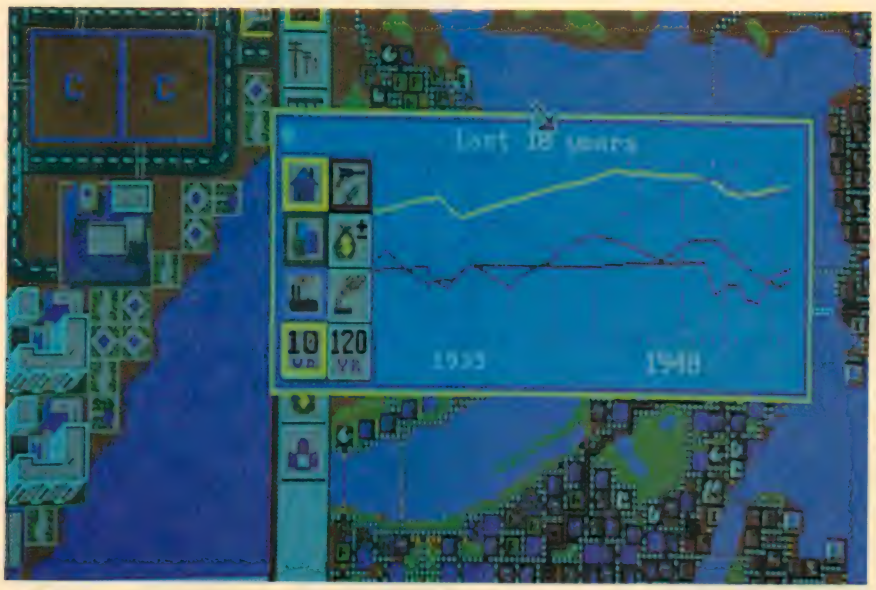
Disaster! The great quake of 1916 strikes. Now you'll find out if you're a great mayor, or just another fat-cat politician.



The various graph windows chart the rise and fall of crime, population, land values, and so on over the span of a decade or a century. In this game, you really do acquire a track record.

HINT

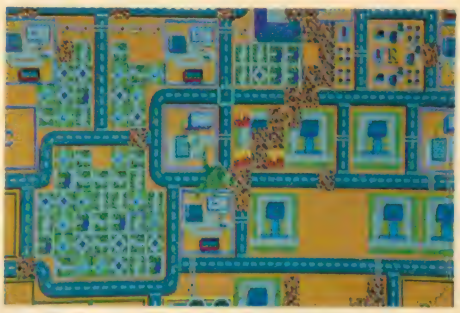
It's possible to grow beyond your means. The crime rate soars, roads collapse, power lines break, and the population starts leaving in droves. You can get a quick, massive infusion of cash on the sly by embezzling. In the Edit Window, move the cursor to the icon strip and type *fund.*. Nothing changes in the city, but your treasury is suddenly ten grand fatter. Make good use of the cash quickly — embezzling is a desperation tactic. It carries the same risk as an unpaid loan from a Mafia don.



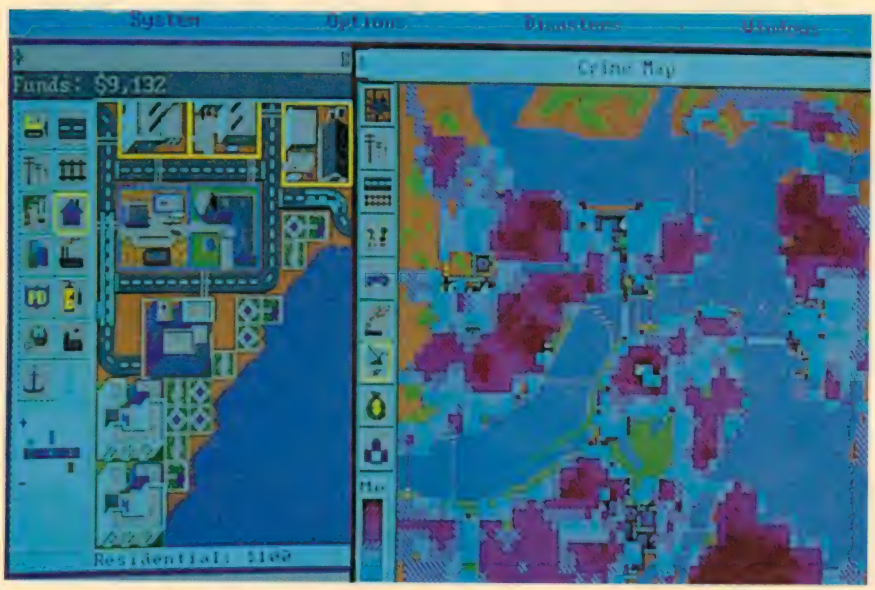
If you prefer to tackle big-city problems from the very start, you can always load one of the programmed cities. Here you see Boston in the 1940s — a far cry from little ol' Duckburg.



Use this map to handle power outages or to plan the location of new generator facilities.



Need instant urban renewal? A click of the mouse brings Godzilla out of the harbor to clear a swath through the middle of downtown.



Use the crime map to help you locate new police stations or plan urban renewal projects.

Hardware requirements: IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles; 512K minimum memory (640K for VGA or EGA graphics); VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy, or Hercules graphics; joystick or mouse optional; printer optional.

MEAN STREETS

The City. Tough, demanding — like you. You've been a P.I. here for longer than you care to remember. You thought you'd seen it all. But you were wrong.

Times are rough in 'Frisco these days, just as they are everywhere else. Radiation hot spots still glow at night, and there's an ever-growing freakshow out on the streets. When you read about Carl Linsky's swan dive off the Golden Gate, you figure it's understandable for a person to take the suicide route. Then his ravishing daughter, Sylvia, melts your heart with her gorgeous eyes and story of foul play. That $10,000 retainer doesn't hurt, either. Hey — a guy's got to eat.

Before long you discover that what police thought was a simple suicide is just the tip of a very dirty iceberg. Law and Order, an organization of neo-Nazis, has allied itself with the powerful Gideon Corporation. It doesn't take a scientist — especially a dead one — to smell a conspiracy.

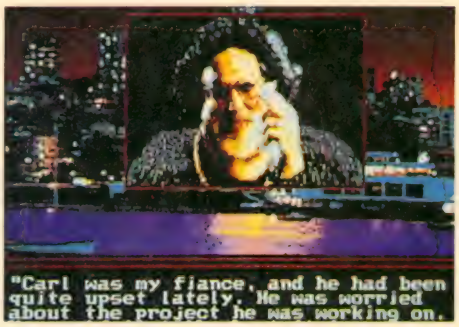
With *Mean Streets*, computer games step closer to true interactive play. Its breathtaking VGA graphics and great RealSound innovation (which finally brings acceptable sound quality to the PC) make it as much movie as game. It's easy to get caught up in the action, so pull out your trench coat, order up a foggy night, and start earning your money.

Access

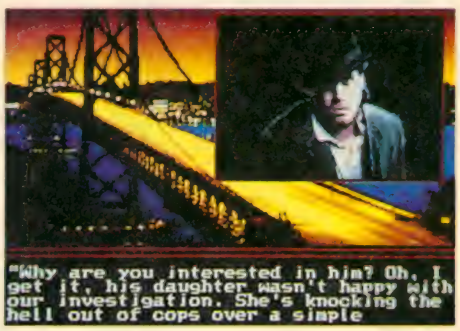


VGA screens shown

Okay, so you shouldn't have brought up the insurance policy. But you've been around, and it wouldn't be the first time you've come across a case of creative policy expediting.



Who would have figured that Sylvia was referring to Delores Lightbody when she spoke of a little hussy that had her father under a spell?



You've never known the police to be this touchy about a case. Is someone upstairs applying a little pressure?



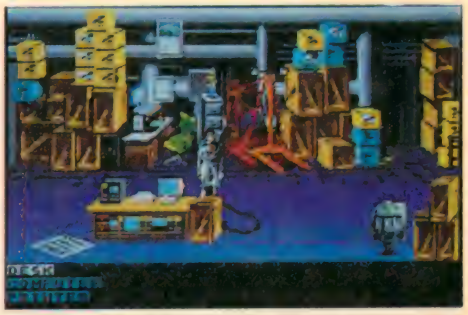
The autopsy report looked pretty ho-hum until you read about Linsky's recent brain surgery.

HINT Obey the cardinal rule of *Mean Streets* — don't overlook anything or anyone. There are some dead ends, as well as some items you really won't need, but you won't know that at the time. So talk to everyone, search everywhere, and take anything that's not nailed down. There are a couple of exceptions, but that's why there's a save-game feature.

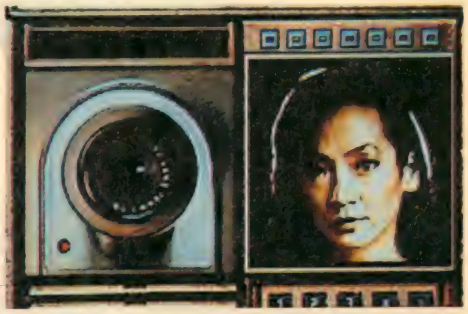
HINT It's nice to be able to just punch in destinations for your speeder, but you should learn to fly it manually as well. If you ever need to go bounty hunting, driving manually is the only way you'll be able to get to the Badlands.



As always, a quick call to your secretary gets results. You just wish the kid would get over the crush she has on you. Can't she see you're no good for her?



At the warehouse Linsky rented, you strike gold. Don't forget to check out all those boxes once you've found a ladder to use.

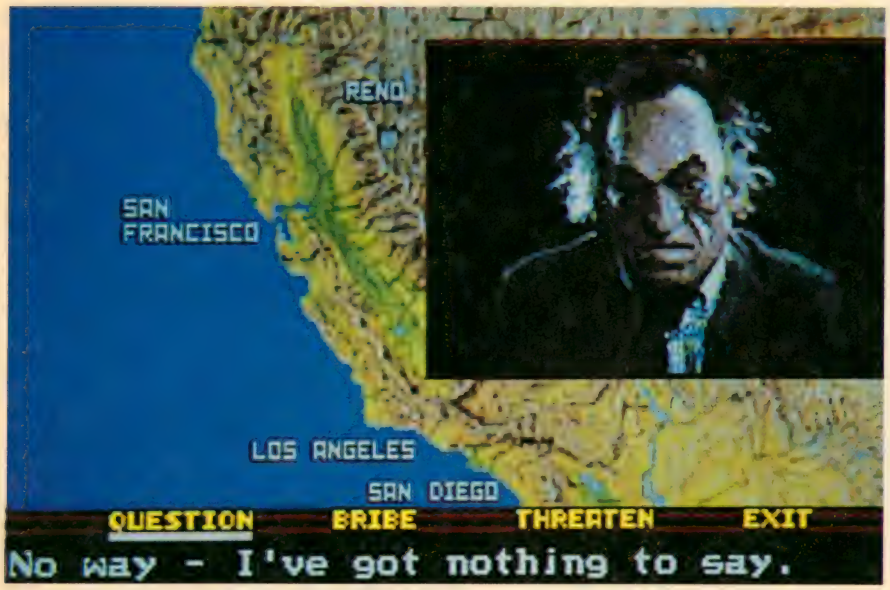


Whenever you're stuck for a lead, it's time to make a call to Lee Chin. She's pricey, she's got a smart mouth, but she delivers the goods.

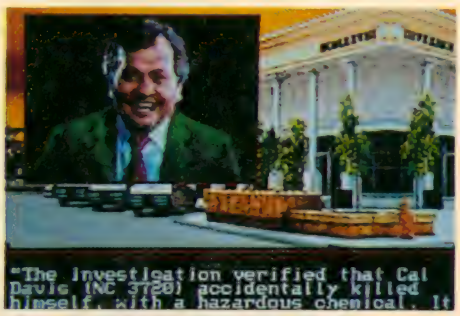


You came up with a couple of clues at Linsky's apartment, although you don't know what to make of them yet. That missing bishop must mean something.

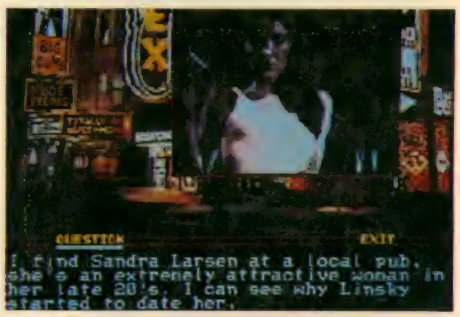
HINT When engaged in gun battles, remember that the other gunmen won't shoot continuously unless you let them get more than halfway across the screen. Try to proceed as far as you can at first without worrying about shooting. Then you can time your openings and pick off the baddies.



Sonny Fletcher did a lot of work for Gideon and Management Training Center, so you should question him thoroughly. Just remember to bring lots of money.



Ol' Smiley here is the kind of guy who gives cops a bad name. After paying out considerably to the "police benevolent fund," you might get some useful info out of the jerk.



Ah, the real woman in Linsky's life. Sandra Larsen shared a lot with Carl Linsky, but does she know anything about his death?

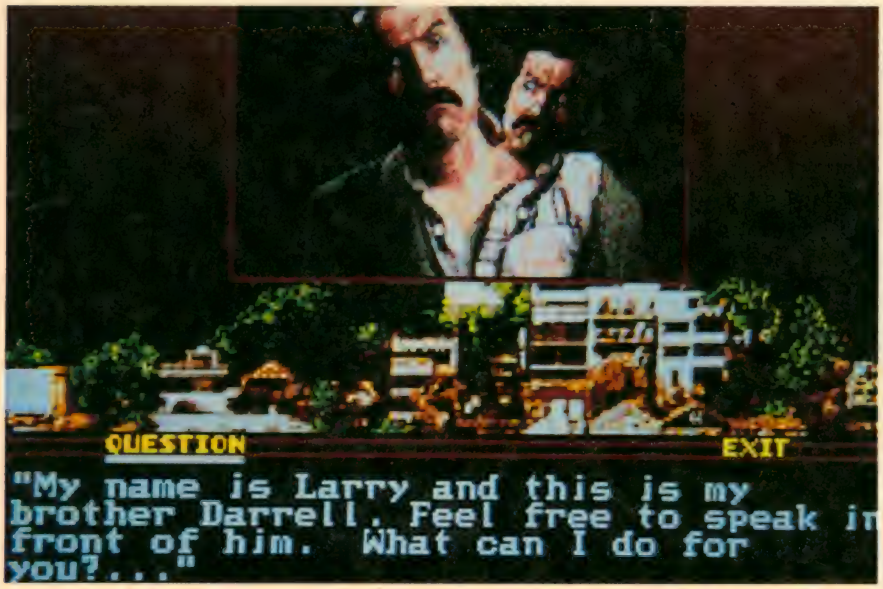


Griffith knows more than he's telling. Get a little rough with him, and he'll spill his guts.

HINT When questioning informants, try to use physical force only as a last resort. Folks such as Delores Lightbody or Arnold Dweeb don't take kindly to being leaned on, and reward such efforts with a well-placed kick or punch. Trying to judge a book by its cover doesn't work very well in *Mean Streets*.



Despite some obvious problems, Ron Meat sees a lot more than you might think. He'll be a good informant if you treat him right.



Larry Hammond worked with the Overlord Project and may have some important information concerning other scientists, such as Cal Davis. Also, be sure to ask him all about the Gideon Corporation.



Even though there are numerous items to find and sell throughout *Mean Streets*, you may need to go bounty hunting in the Badlands for extra ammo and, if necessary, extra cash.

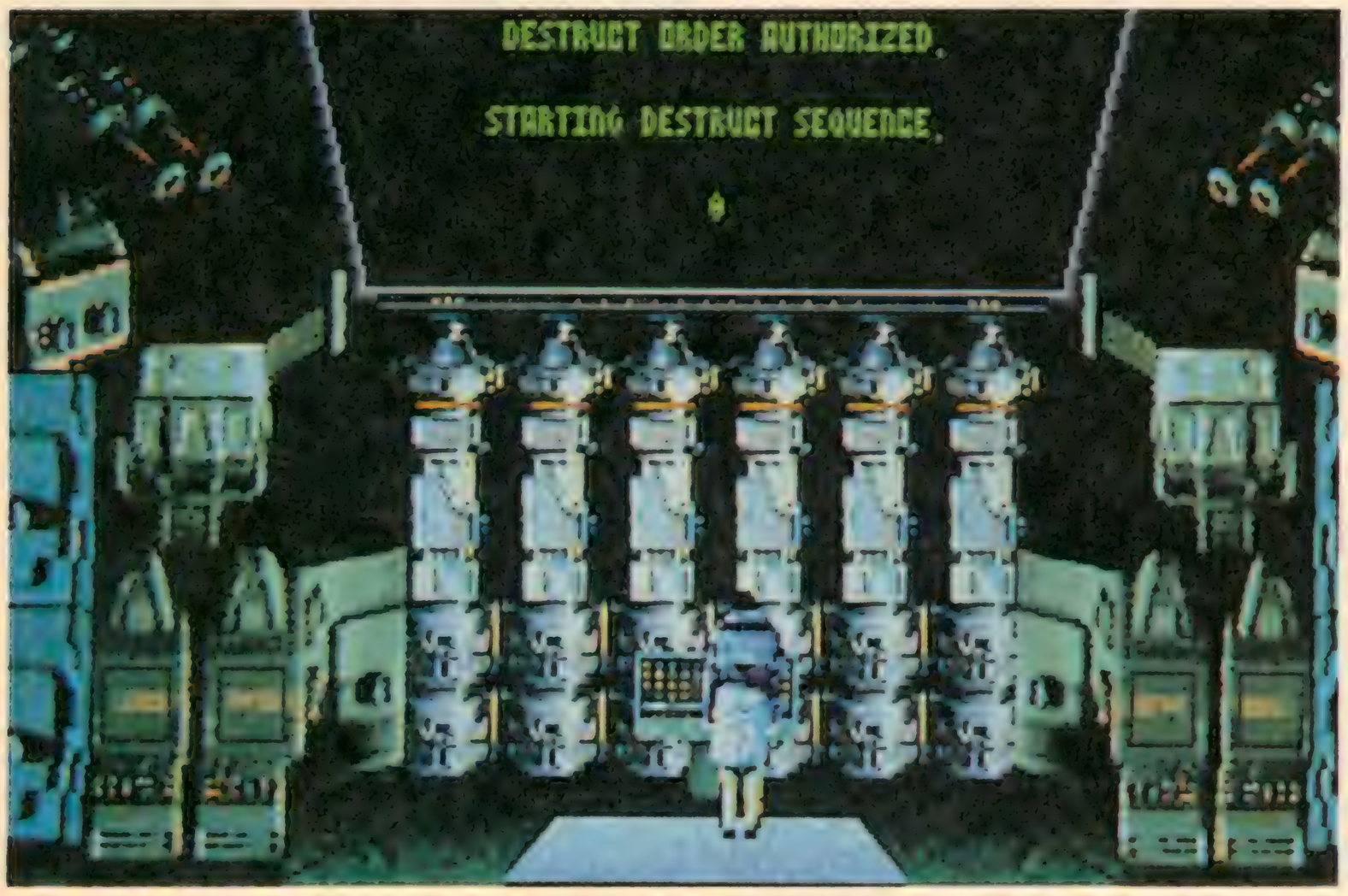


Pay Ms. Lovetoy well. She can provide you with information that will bring you considerably closer to the true nature of Overlord.

HINT It's essential to make an easy-to-read list of the passcards and passwords. Once you get to the main computer, you won't have much time to enter all the information. If you have everything right in front of you, your only concern should be your typing speed.



Welcome to the offices of Law and Order, where the unholy alliance with Gideon Corporation is directed. But before you peg Robert Knott as Mr. Big, think again.



Once you overpower the guards and escape the traps of the Overlord lab, there's still the small matter of initiating the computer destruct sequence. You'll have to be fast with the passcards and passwords.



Your folks will be so proud to see your name in the paper. But had always figured, given your lifestyle, to see you mentioned in the crime roundup section — or worse, the obituaries.



Though the undying thanks of the entire world is nice, you suspect that the thanks of Sylvia Linsky will be much more rewarding. There's also that $1,000,000 policy to consider.

Hardware requirements: IBM, Tandy, and compatibles; 512K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, or Hercules graphics.

MIGHT AND MAGIC II: GATES TO ANOTHER WORLD

Might and Magic II continues the story of the world of Cron that began in the original *Might and Magic*.

Though *M&M II* has an overall plot, the real interest rests with its individual quests. As you gain strength and visit new places, you will enter a series of difficult tasks to complete on your way to solving the quest as a whole. These mini-quests range from defeating monsters to rescuing helpless characters. The difficulty of the task increases in proportion to your characters' levels.

One of this game's major strengths is its automatic mapping facility. Once you give one of your characters the cartographer skill, you no longer have to worry about making maps. Just press M, and a display shows where you are and where you've been. This feature single-handedly raises *M&M II* above most of its competition, guaranteeing a much less frustrating playing experience.

M&M II is among the best in its genre. It has strong graphics, a well-designed interface, a lengthy playing time, and a host of options — everything you need for a first-rate fantasy role-playing game.

Origin

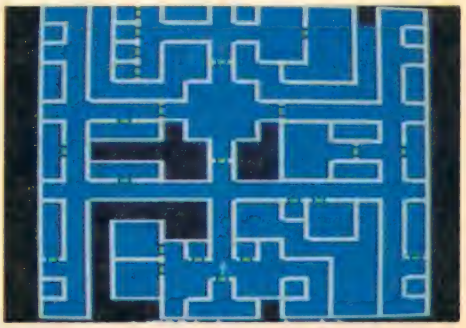


MCGA screens shown

You begin your adventure from inside the hotel. This first-person view exists wherever the party travels, though the viewpoint changes to meet different situations.



Create characters and attributes by tossing a die. You can assign your character to one of eight different classes, depending on your characteristic values.



A character with the cartographer skill can produce this helpful overhead map. A flashing arrow shows the party's location. Here, there's only a little unexplored area, shown in black.



Near an impenetrable blue wall, a sign appears, saying, "Stairs to Cavern. Descend?" If you do, you'll be fighting more and more difficult monsters and finding treasure and clues.

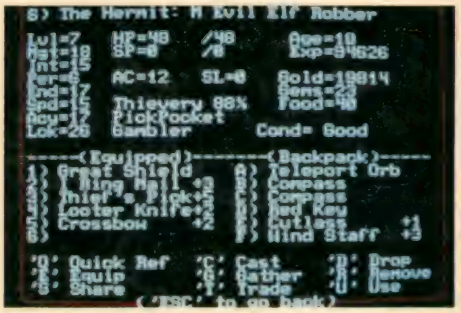
HINT Have one of your characters learn the cartographer skill immediately. Once you have it, you no longer have to draw maps. Simply leave the inn and head for the weapons shop. Not far away, you'll find someone willing to teach you. Don't bother with anything else until you've learned the skill.

HINT

Wander, wander, wander, but don't forget to improve. *M&MII* is structured to let you explore to your heart's content, so there's no point restricting the areas you visit. But visit the training rooms often, especially at the beginning of your quest. Characters move up in levels at their own pace, so be sure to take advantage of any possible advance.



Inside the bar, Gabrielle the barmaid asks if we need her services. Say yes. It never hurts to find out what these services are. Most importantly, be sure to use the taverns to replenish your food supply.



The computer can compile a detailed character report. Everything you need to know is included here with the exception of the magic he can use. You'll have to inquire about that.



You can leave the cities by finding the exit. But outside is the great unknown, and the map in the *M&M II* package is only of partial help. Danger is everywhere, and there are few places to rest.



There's a training academy in every city. Enter them to see if your characters can progress to the next level. It just takes experience and money, both of which you get from fighting monsters and completing quests.

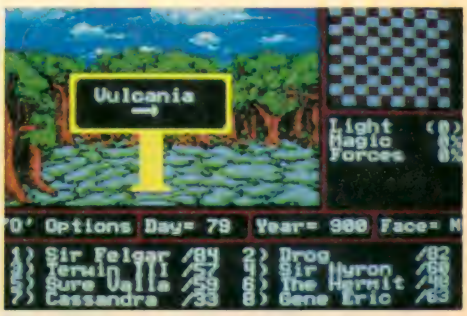
HINT As soon as your magic-users become members of the local guilds (often at a hefty price), they can purchase spells suitable for their class. Simply find the guild and have your adventurers buy the spells they're allowed. Certain spells can only be acquired through the guild.



After resting, the sun rises and daylight spreads across the land. It's the same scene as the last screen, but your trek seems more hopeful with a blue sky and white clouds guiding your way.



When your party comes to a ferry boat crossing, check the map, then decide whether or not to cross. Sometimes it's better not to, but usually it's the only way to where you're going. Besides, it's cheap.



Signs help you move from one place to another. Not all of them, however, are completely accurate. And most only give general directions when specific ones would be much better.



The party encounters three griffins in the woods. Your choices, shown in the middle of the screen, are to attack, bribe, hide, or run. Bravely (but maybe foolishly), the party chooses to attack.

HINT Pay strict attention to the clues given by signs, statues, and other characters. Write them down — each and every one. Sometimes these clues refer to specific days (your quest is measured in days). Then, when the appropriate day comes, refer to your notes so you'll be where you're supposed to be.



With one griffin hurt from an earlier attack, Sir Felgar is in position to attack, fight, block an attack, run, use an item, or exchange an item with another character. He's a fighter, so he'll attack.



A pathetic beggar warns you of danger. Often, signs or characters will tell you what you can expect in their cities. Listen to them — they know more than you do.

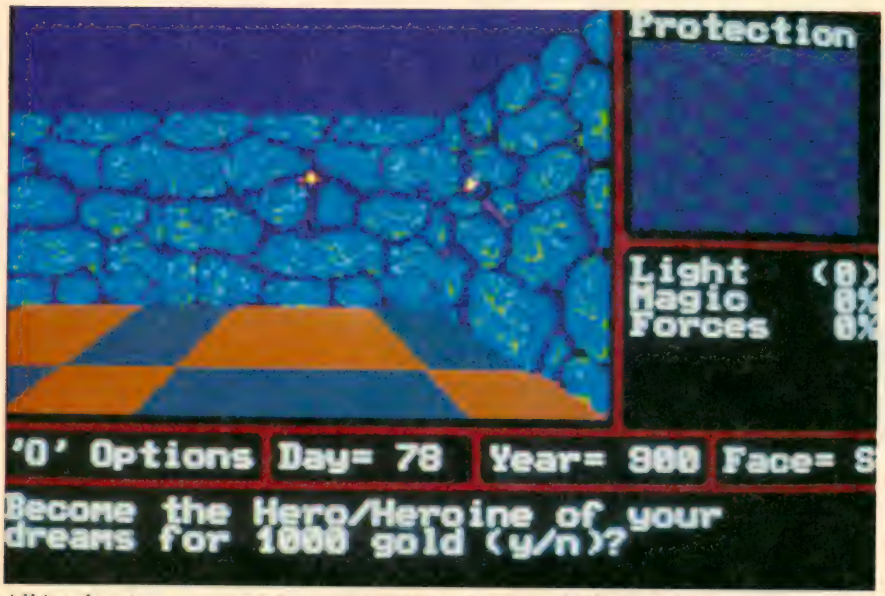


Your party is in deep trouble now. Not only have they stumbled on four demonic flaming fears, but they've also managed to fall into a deadly lava pit.



Inside the weapons shop, Sir Felgar shops for the best weaponry possible. A long bow with a +4 rating costs 3000 pieces of gold, while an interesting wakizashi is identically priced.

HINT Become familiar with the way the portals work. You can travel outside in this game, and at times you simply have to. But the cities are all connected by a series of portals. Also remember that the portal that brought you into a city can take you right back again should you find the new city too tough to get through.



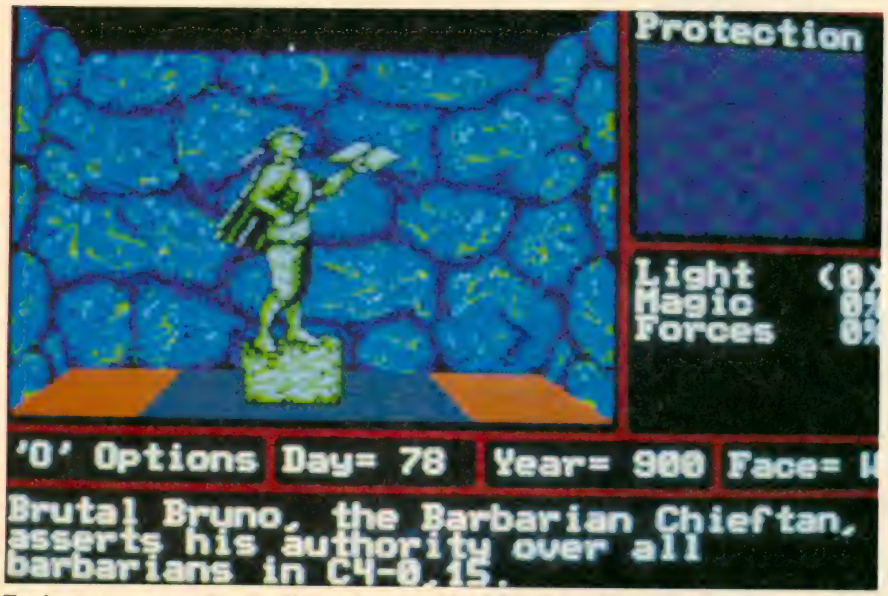
All it takes is money and opportunity to learn a skill, though each character can learn only two. If you want new skills, you must seek out the one place in each city where you can have old ones removed from your memory.



These hungry plants, winged steed, and phantasms hope to have the party for lunch. Actually, this is a very difficult fight, and the magic-users had best be on their toes.



Inept wizards aren't difficult to defeat, but others can be dangerous. The secret here is to use the special weapons in your arsenal, hoping to defeat more than one opponent simultaneously.



Each statue you find offers you a valuable clue. This statue reveals the location (as found on the map in the package) of Bruno the Barbarian. You must seek him out to solve the quest.

Hardware requirements: IBM, Tandy, and compatibles; 384K minimum memory (256K for CGA, Tandy, and Hercules).

JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL



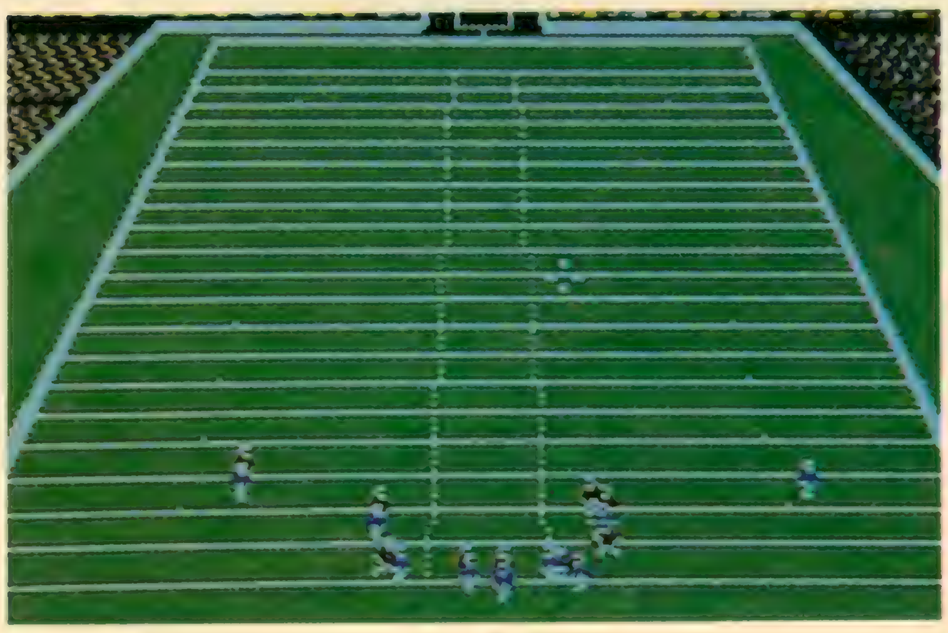
EGA screens shown

You get a full view of the field at the kickoff — as well as a fresh chance to score.

John Madden Football leaves little to chance. You even control the weather.



The crosshair marks your aim on the passing screen.



You either love him or hate him. John Madden, that jovial football commentator, doesn't inspire any half-baked feelings. But regardless of your personal opinion about the man himself, John Madden knows his football. Oakland's former coach sees winning football as the natural result of sound decision-making. That's why you'll find a stronger sense of realism in *John Madden Football* than in gridiron games where random elements decide the action.

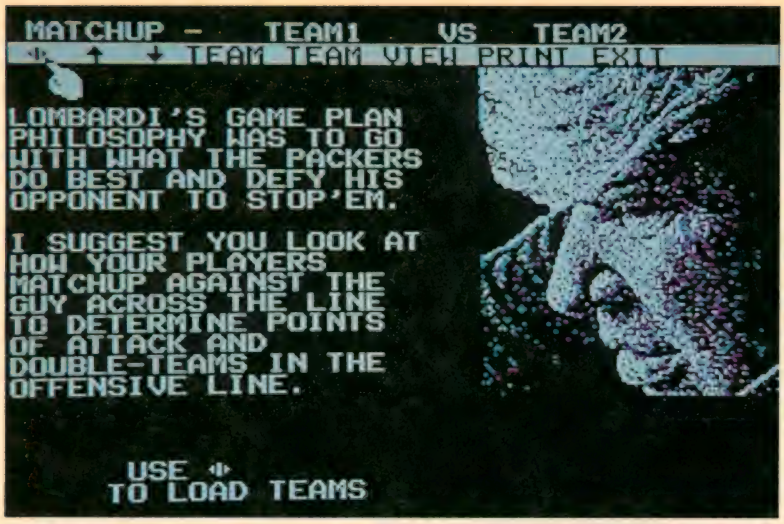
The first of your many options is deciding the game format. The quick game limits you to just nine plays each for offense and defense, but does allow you to forego the lengthy setup of the standard game. Next you decide what type of roster to assemble. Your ten choices include teams modeled on the Pittsburgh and Oakland dynasties of the 70s, as well as the Chicago and San Francisco powerhouses of the 80s. There are also all-Madden and all-timer teams from which to choose.

The Madden Report analyzes your team strengths, with the Excitable One's viewpoint on all that is football. You can diagram your own plays, modify the 162 plays included with the game, or, if you're not already suffering from informational overload, pull up some of the exhaustive sets of statistics. Once you decide game conditions, you're ready.

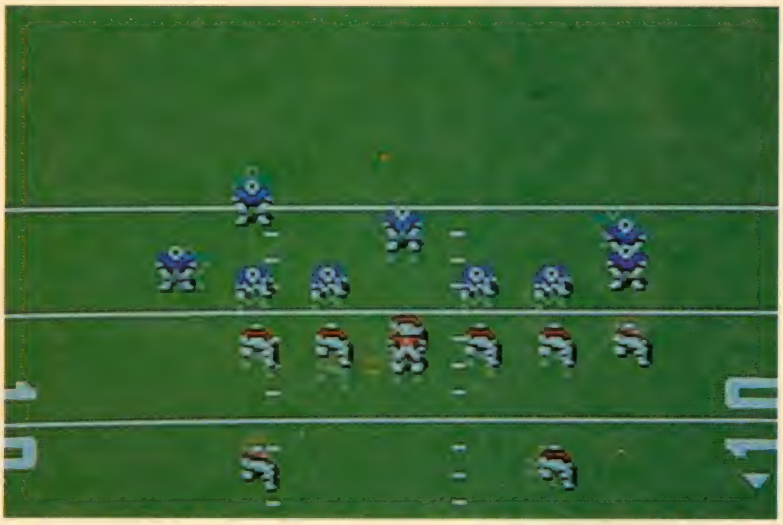
When you take to the field, you can simply pick the play and let the computer handle the action, or, if you're feeling energetic, grab your joystick and run the ball yourself. Either way, you can't get much closer to the ultimate armchair quarterbacking than *John Madden Football*.

Electronic Arts

Hardware requirements: IBM, Tandy, and compatibles; 256K minimum memory; EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick and mouse optional.



Need advice on your offensive line or overall game strategy? Try the Madden Report.



First and goal requires special care. You'd better leave slip-ups on the practice field.



A surprise play can pay off, especially when a land rover like John Riggins hits pay dirt.

HINT

John Madden Football was carefully crafted to portray actual players — many of whom are the stuff of football legend. Its intricate realism, however, means you get fully drawn characters with both strengths and weaknesses. Although you occasionally find multitalented dynamos like Walter Payton (whom Madden considers the finest athlete ever to play professional football), most players are limited to one or two main areas of expertise.

LAKERS VERSUS CELTICS AND THE NBA PLAYOFFS



EGA screens shown

Boston's #33, Larry Bird, brings the ball up court. The computer teams behave just like their counterparts. The game manual even advises you against trying to reshape a team's playing style.

Your ten team choices include all-star squads from both East and West divisions.



Three levels of play help you predetermine how many fouls you're likely to have called.



There's a lot more separating Los Angeles and Boston than 3,000 miles. Each city's NBA team has an altogether distinctive style. The Lakers: lightning-quick and airbound; armed with the explosive fast break. The Celtics: slower but sturdier; masters of sharpshooting and pinpoint passing.

The archrivalry between the Lakers and the Celtics took root in the '60s, and has raged mightily during this decade. Theirs is the classic confrontation in basketball. Whenever they play, sparks fly. Now you can have this grueling rivalry in your own home, thanks to *Lakers Versus Celtics*. Actually, you have ten teams from which to choose, all in hot pursuit of playoff victories.

Striking just the right balance between realism and enjoyment, *Lakers Versus Celtics* reflects the work that went into designing this accurate simulation. For example, the computer players actually look like the men they represent. You'll find Kareem sporting his trademark goggles and Larry Bird topped off with a head of blonde hair. Even more impressive are the signature shots. It's a little startling the first time you watch the computerized Kareem break out his patented sky hook, or see the electronic Bird launch a three-pointer.

The setup can be tailored to individual taste, whether you're interested in running a quick game or setting up tournament play. This is one simulation that offers basketball for every fan, regardless of their favorite team.

Electronic Arts

Hardware requirements: IBM, Tandy, and compatibles; 384K minimum memory; EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick recommended; supports sound boards.



Halftime is a good opportunity to review your statistics and substitute players from the bench.



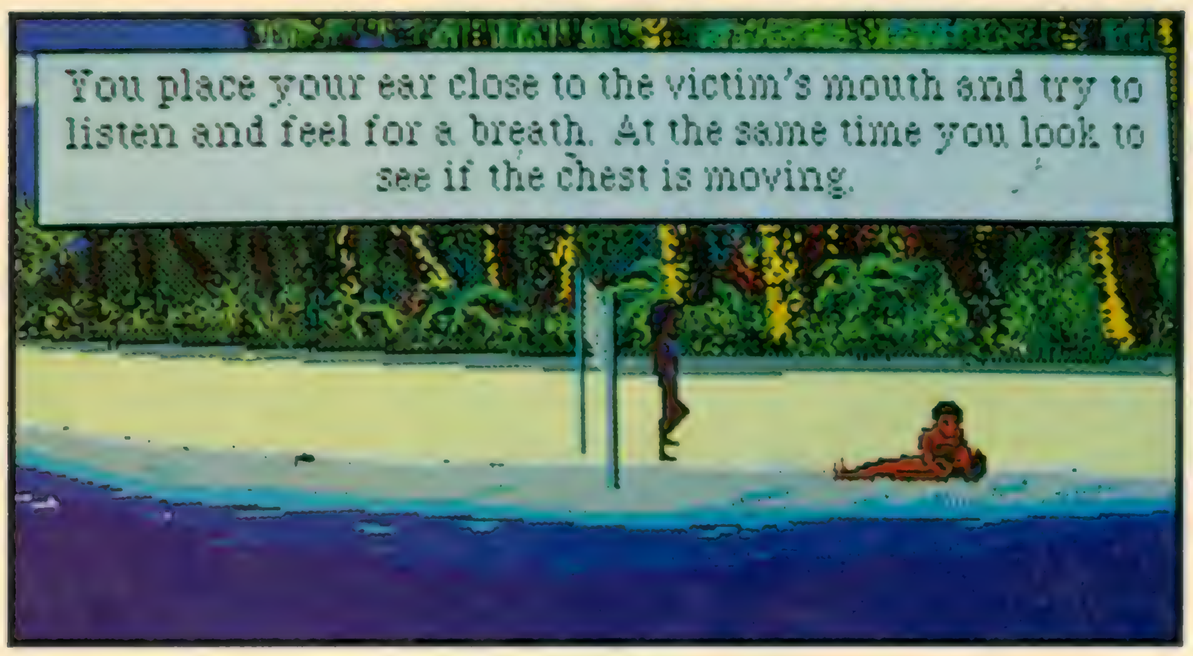
Notice that Kareem and James Worthy haven't given up their eyewear to play in *Lakers Versus Celtics*.



Sooner or later, you knew it had to happen. Behold the sky hook.

HINT

Each team is capable of different scoring opportunities, but try this for a quick bucket from any team: When your opponents score, don't waste time bringing the ball in. Quickly flip it to the closest man, then jump and shoot the ball all the way down court. Chances are the shot won't go in, but you might have another player by the basket who can easily convert your pass into two fast points.



Saving lives is one of the first duties of an officer in Iceman. *Follow the instructions for CPR in your technical manual, and this beach bunny will be bouncing around in no time.*

Code Name: Iceman

LESLIE MIZELL

You loved Tom Clancy's books, and you were first in line to see *Das Boot* and *The Hunt for Red October*. Now what's a poor submarine fan to do? If you're smart, you'll grab a copy of *Code Name: Iceman*, a seaworthy simulation-adventure from **Sierra**.

Those folks at Sierra must have groaned, however, when the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War thawed. In this age of *glasnost* and almost universal democracy, the Communist Menace isn't, and espionage writers are scrambling to find new bad guys to replace the Soviets. But evidently *Code Name: Iceman* was too far along for Jim Walls, the designer of the *Police Quest* series, to follow suit.

So the game involves a U.S. ambassador kidnapped by Middle Eastern terrorists. Or are they really from the Middle East? Is that a Soviet accent we detect? And as you start out on a mission to rescue the ambassador, your submarine is besieged by Communist ships and subs faster than you can say *borscht*.

Still, once you've accepted *Iceman* as being a little out of date, you can start to wallow in the most complex adventure Sierra has ever produced. To play the *Police Quest* series of games, the only insider knowledge of the criminal justice system you needed was repeated viewings of "Starsky and Hutch" or "Hawaii 5-0." You had to shoot targets, conduct searches, question witnesses, and collect evidence. It wasn't difficult for any couch potato who'd watched a few reruns.

But playing *Iceman* is truly like going through naval drills. Sandwiched between the beach scene and the rescue of the ambassador — typically Sierra interactive sessions — is an intricate submarine simulation. By the time you land in Tunisia, you'll feel like you've been through basic training under one of the toughest instructors ever to wear a uniform.

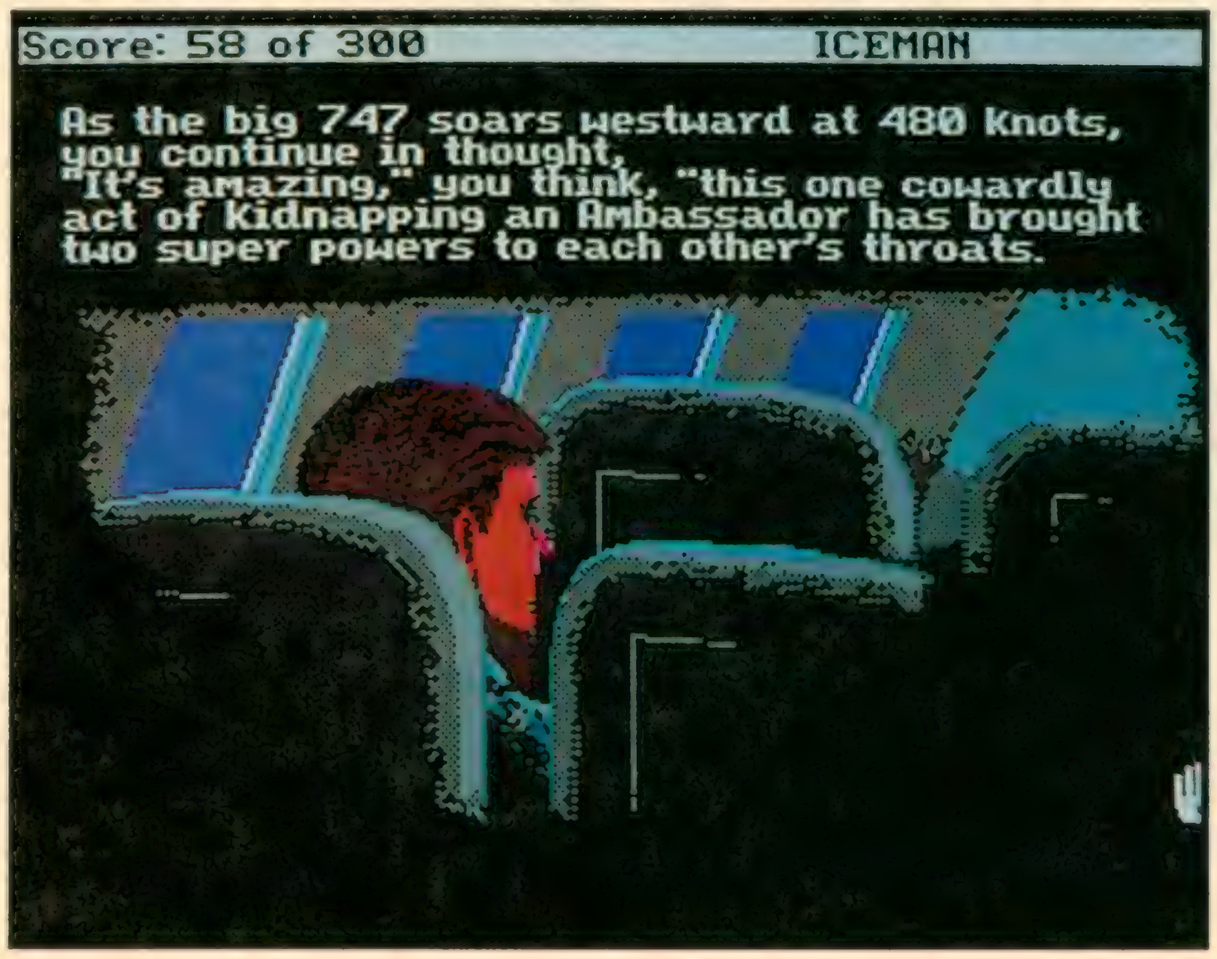


Do you like blondes or brunettes? Since your opening line is "Can I buy you a drink?" maybe you should try your luck with the brunette. The blonde already has a tall cold one.



Hmm. That agent your superior is talking about during the briefing looks vaguely familiar. Will that one-night stand in Tahiti come back to haunt you?

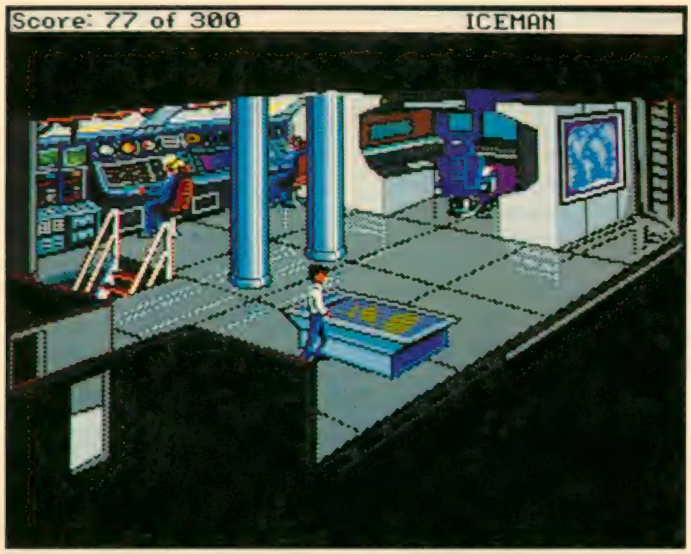
You barely have time to catch your breath from the trip to Washington when you're eating more smoked almonds on a flight to Hawaii.



BEACH BLANKET VOLLEYBALL

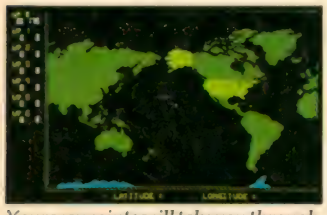
As John Westland, you begin *Iceman* on vacation in Tahiti. It's a tough life for a tough secret agent. But the sun-filled holidays aren't going to last long. Trouble seems to follow you no matter where you go.

As a matter of fact, danger is right by your shoulder even when you join a friendly game of volleyball on the beach. One of your bikini-clad opponents ventures too far into the surf to retrieve the ball. You must rescue and revive her. Luckily, a naval officer's technical manual contains life-saving directions for cardiopulmonary resuscitation.



Once you're aboard the Blackhawk, *your first duty is to map the course to Tunisia. Choose five waypoints and map a course of straight lines between them.*

Your day in the sand turns into a night under the stars when you meet Stacey. You seem to make awfully good time with her, but the next morning you awake to a note on your pillow. And then you find that her earring contains some microfilm. Was she a fellow U.S. agent or a Mata Hari?



Your waypoints will take you through the Bering Strait, across the Arctic Ocean, around Greenland, and into the Atlantic. Plot close to land — too far off the optimum course and you'll have to start over.

By now the world situation is heating up faster than the Tahitian sand. You're called back to Washington when a U.S. ambassador is kidnapped, seemingly by an oil-rich terrorist organization. At your Pentagon briefing, you're told to make contact with an agent in Tunisia. The best way to sneak into the country's harbor seems to be by submarine, so the USS *Blackhawk*, an advanced nuclear sub, awaits you in Hawaii. The rescue of the ambassador — and possibly the peace of the entire free world — rests on your shoulders.

RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP

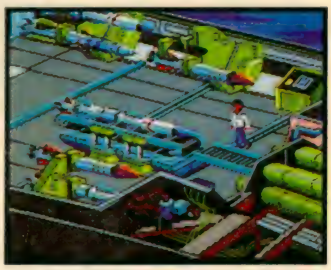
From the moment you board the USS *Blackhawk*, you must prove that you are capable of running a submarine. Once you break coded messages from the Navy and the CIA, your orders are complete. You must maneuver the submarine undetected through the Bering Strait, beneath the icecaps of the Arctic Ocean, and down into the Atlantic, where you'll sneak into Tunisia for the rescue.

Chart your course by selecting five waypoints between Hawaii and Tunisia. If you enter the longitude and latitude of the points, the sub's computer will inform you if the waypoint you've selected is possible. Choose your waypoints carefully — if you veer more than a few hundred miles off the optimum course, you'll have to start again.

Once you've selected your course, you'll want to become more familiar with the interior of the submarine. Find your way around its claustrophobic expanse, making sure that everyone is working diligently and that all the equipment is functioning normally.

What's this in the torpedo room? Some of the equipment doesn't cycle properly. Luckily, there's a cabinet of spare parts in the machinists' room. But if you think a washer is strictly for laundry and a cylinder is something only cars have, you might have a little trouble fixing the delicate machinery of a nuclear submarine.

First of all, take careful measurements of the defective parts. Then go back the machinists' room and find the spare parts you need. The cotter pin will need adjusting, so you'll have to fire up the equipment. It's not hard — just go straight down the line of machines from right to left, using the lathe first, then the drill press, and finally the grinder.



Another one of your duties involves making sure all submarine machinery is functioning properly. You need to be able to count on your torpedoes in case you run into trouble.

No sooner do you arrive back in the control room than the captain insists you take a lesson in submarine steering. He'll bark commands at you, but try to concentrate on using the keyboard controls or identifying the correct instruments with your mouse.

Though the control panel of the *Blackhawk* looks intimidating, you're actually concerned with little of it. The depth of the sub is controlled with the up and down arrow keys or by clicking on the dive lever. The speed is controlled with the + and - keys or by clicking on the engine lever.

VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

Right after you get these simple controls in hand, a Soviet ship will attack. This act of aggression is actually a study in patience for anyone who has ever played an arcade game. Your natural tendency may be to

start shooting back, but you should wait until the ship is well within your range — that's more like 7,000 feet away, not 16,000 — before you begin firing.

Your active sonar should already be off, and you should turn on silent running and immediately dive to below 500 feet. Without active sonar, the ship's torpedoes won't be able to find you and will either sail by or explode out of your range. When the white line appears on your screen indicating that the Soviet ship is getting close, you can prepare to launch your own missiles.

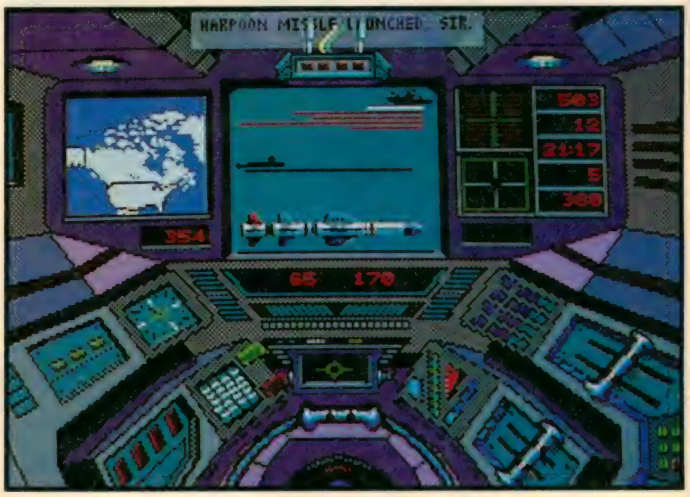


"Boss Dice" has the same basic rules as poker. But this old salt is an expert player. Definitely keep playing until you earn his bottle of rum, but you may not be able to earn the cash or the electrical device he has to offer.

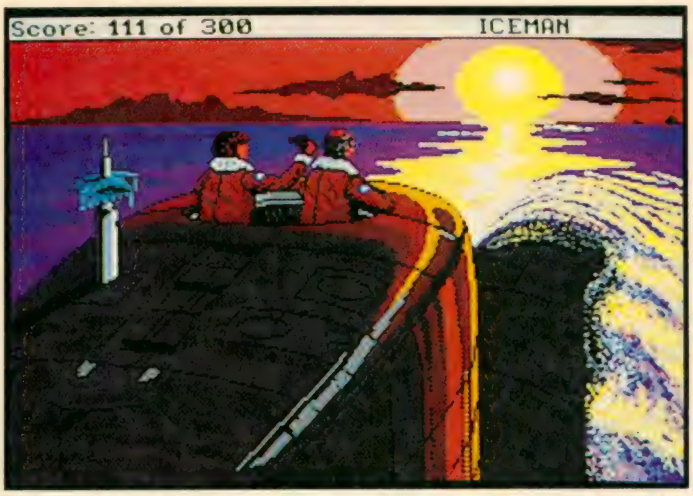
Make sure no enemy torpedoes are close by, then launch a harpoon homing missile. If you then fire a decoy torpedo, you'll pull the next incoming torpedo off your trail. Repeat this twice more, and you'll receive word that the Soviet ship is sinking. No torpedoes already headed for your sub will make impact after the enemy sinks.

But catch your breath quickly. After a brief reprieve, you'll be back at the helm, navigating the sub through an ice field. Your depth is important here — you'll run aground if you go below 200 feet. Stay at five knots and look for a pattern in the icebergs. You'll squeeze between two, then turn hard right or left to avoid three or four more, then squeeze between two more, and so on until you're contacted by the ice station.

Did you think your trouble would then end? No way. There's a Soviet submarine after you as you round Greenland. And you, unfortunately, used most of your weapons attacking her sister ship. This is one of those times when it pays to retreat. Dive



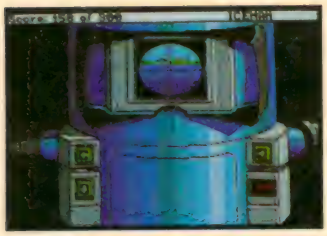
Patience, patience. Though it may strain your nerves, you've got to wait until the enemy ship gets close to you before you launch your first torpedoes.



The view from the bridge isn't encouraging. One of those Soviet ships is moving in fast — and the captain doesn't seem to want to discuss glasnost.



You can't even bask in the glory of your victory over the Soviet ship because there's an iceberg field ahead. There's a definite pattern to the bergs, so save your game before you enter the field, and keep practicing until you earn a perfect navigation score.



When you're close to Tunisia, the captain will invite you to look through the periscope. Jot down the bearings of the oil rig and harbor, then get the distance to each from the sailor manning the sonar.

until you reach 2,300 feet, and then wait out the enemy. The sub will approach, then retreat. Once it disappears from the sonar screen, it's safe for you to continue your journey.

At long last, you're approaching your rendezvous point with the USS *Coontz*. When you've signaled the ship, you'll want to maneuver through the Strait of Gibraltar under the ship's cover. It's easy enough to get underneath the *Coontz* — just set the sub's wheel straight ahead and keep at five knots and 500 feet below the water's surface.

But once you're in position underneath the *Coontz* (shown as a cross on your screen) you'll have to stay there — and that's when things get tricky because the technical manual is no help at all. The key is to try to keep your speed and depth as steady as possible. The wheel controls the vertical movements of your sub underneath the ship. So when she falls, you turn right. When she rises, turn left.

SOMEBODY'S AMBASSADOR IS MISSING

When you've made it through the Strait of Gibraltar, the submarine simulation section of *Iceman* ends and the adventure takes over again. You'll have to sneak into the harbor to contact your fellow agents, but you'd better be properly equipped first.

Find and repair the diving vehicle, locate your scuba gear, then head out into the warm Mediterranean waters. Unless you're a navigation specialist, you're going to have



Now that you're in position to swim to shore and meet your contact, you must make sure your equipment is shipshape. Check the dive vehicle and locate your scuba gear.

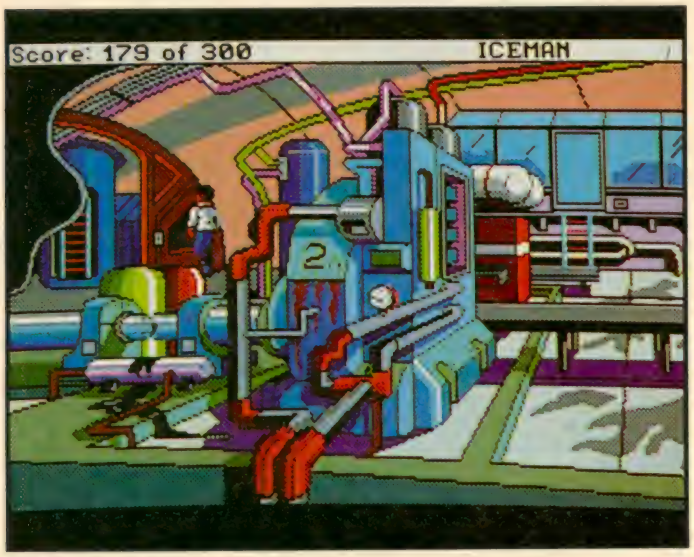
trouble locating the oil rig and the harbor. It's best to think of the ocean as a grid, and to search each screen in order. Both the rig and the harbor are within ten screens to the left and ten screens up after you leave the sub.

If you didn't win the electrical device during your game of "Boss Dice," you'll have to find an alternative route into the harbor. Look for a cave, work your way through it, and then make contact with the fisherman. After all, now that you've survived the submarine, the rest of the mission is a breeze.



When you're in the cave, your air bubbles will always travel upward. But the debris from a burnt flare will follow the current and lead you to the exit.

It's simple enough to follow the maps that the fisherman and Stacey give you — just remember that you never want to be caught with incriminating evidence on your person. When you reach Stacey's apartment, search for a weapon and plot your entry into the terrorists' headquar-



Locating the oil rig and the harbor is a matter of guesswork unless you're a trained navigator. Divide the ocean into grids and search the ten screens to the left and the ten screens up from your sub.



Now that you've set foot on shore, you can make contact with the appointed agent. Just don't forget proper procedure.

ters. It's as simple as making a phone call.

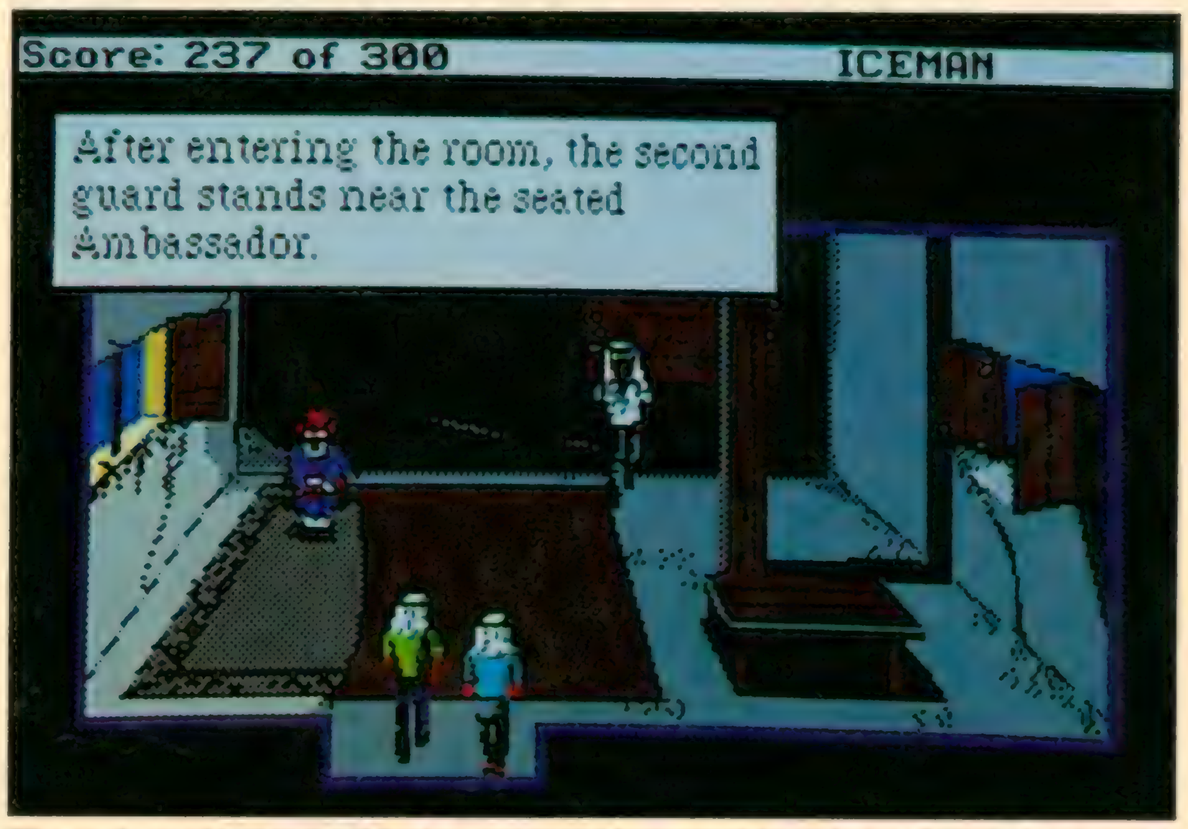
But even after you've rescued the ambassador, there's one final challenge: a race to your escape helicopter through the tortuous curves of a mountain road. It's the only real arcade sequence in *Iceman*, and while it's no "Astro Chicken," it is still difficult enough to pose a final trial to anyone who has survived this long.

But the survivors of this game will really have accomplished something. It's Sierra's toughest adventure, and it's frustrating enough to make you pull out your hair, but by the time John Westland receives his decorations on the deck of an aircraft carrier, you'll have a new respect for the complexities of submarine service. When you finally finish *Code Name: Iceman*, you'll either run down to join the Navy, or you'll thank your lucky stars the recruiter was at lunch that time you stopped by.

GP



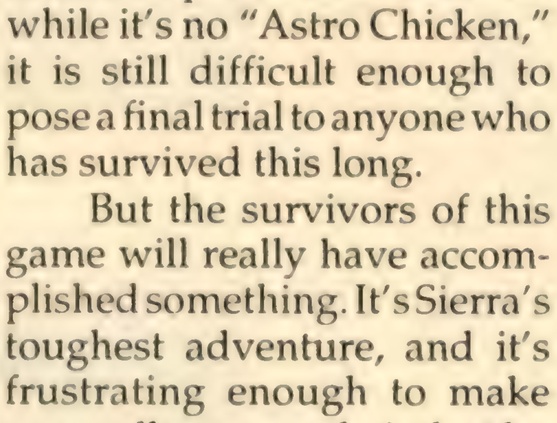
Search Stacey's apartment for any items you might need when you storm the terrorists' headquarters. Then nab the delivery guy and use his clothes for a disguise.



The ambassador seems OK, but neither of you will be safe until you take care of these two terrorists.



Your escape is near, but you won't get to the helicopter unless you can maneuver these winding roads. Is nothing easy for our man, Iceman?



Follow the first agent's map and you'll find this oasis where your second contact is waiting. Hey! Is that a familiar face under all those veils?

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick and mouse optional; supports sound boards; 8 Mhz computer or faster recommended.



Hmm, no wasted time in this scenario! Before you've had a chance to issue a single command, your crew reports a number of enemy contacts. Click on 1:1 time to give yourself room to issue commands.

Harpoon

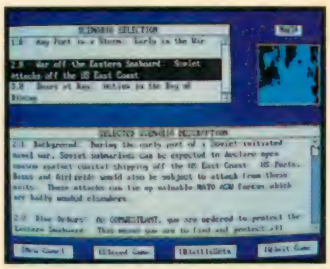
NEIL RANDALL

Potential conflicts between NATO and the Warsaw Pact — or, more specifically, between the U.S. and the USSR — have been big game sellers in recent years. Certainly, nobody actually wanted such conflicts, but in games they have always been interesting, if only to see what happens when the two most money-draining armed forces in world history use the highest of technologies to capture or defend areas of mutual concern.

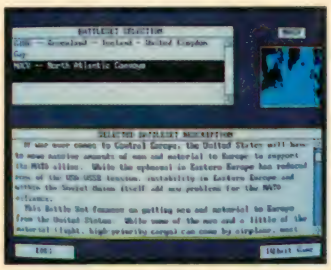
And frankly, the current world situation hasn't changed things much. The game player's interest in a clash between these two superpowers continues to be sparked by two essential developments in the technology of warfare: Nuclear weapons might make the whole exercise academic, and warfare is more impersonal than at any other time in history. No longer do you actually shoot at someone. Instead, you target entire units from a distance.

The role of the individual arms of the forces is another consideration. Land is the ultimate goal, but capturing or defending it requires solid command of both air and sea. Each side must maintain enormous air forces as well as huge, wildly expensive navies. With shipping lanes for both sides (but especially NATO) very long and extremely fragile, navies exist to destroy enemy lanes and protect friendly ones. Supporting ground troops comes into play here as well, and even the air forces are dependent upon ships. Aircraft carriers, after all, carry far more than just tactical fighters.

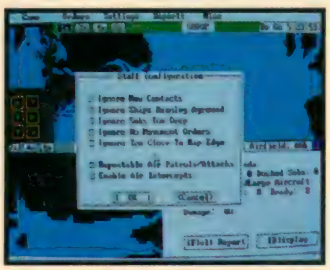
So military systems continue to intrigue, whether or not their use in actual warfare is even a remote possibility. To this end, the games that will suffer most from the breakout of peace in Europe are those whose focus lies in running the bad-guy-commies into the ground or whose basis is action rather than strategy. There will always be room for a well-designed, thoughtfully constructed game that concentrates on the strategy and tactics of a weapons system rather than on the politics of a given conflict situation. Such games might not sell quite as well as before, but they'll sell nevertheless.



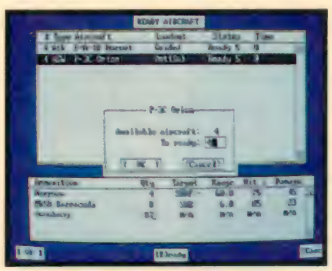
Scenario #2 of the North Atlantic battle set features fighting off the east coast of the U.S. Choosing this scenario brings the war to your own back door — which makes victory seem even more important than it would ordinarily be.



The focus of the North Atlantic Convoys battle set is to transport troops and supplies from North America to Europe. The Allies had trouble with this during WWII, and the Soviet navy is far stronger than the German navy ever was.



This menu lets you tailor the role of your staff to your liking. You'll have to pick up any slack, so in a beginning game you shouldn't let them ignore too many of their duties.



Don't forget to ready your aircraft when you think you're in air range of the enemy. It's always a solid strategy to get rid of any enemy ships before they can reach you.

HAVE WE GOT A NAVAL CONFLICT FOR YOU!

Harpoon is precisely such a

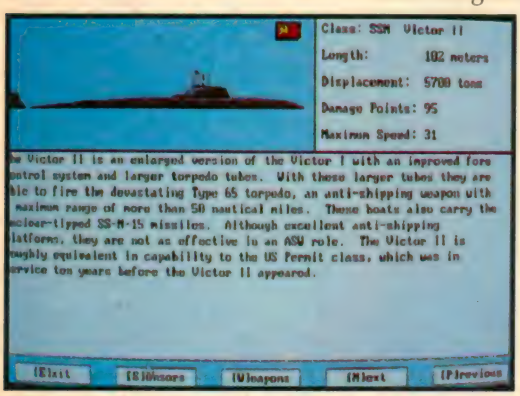


Highlight the enemy group, then choose "Full Report" from the information window. You'll get this sparse but valuable information about the surface fleet west by southwest to your position.



Harpoon is a kinder and gentler game than most. You may have ordered an attack on an out-of-range target, but the game won't chastise you. Instead, your crew will ask if you want to close and attack — clearly what you meant in the first place.

game. Like the board game on which it is based (some of the same designers worked on both), *Harpoon* seeks to simulate what it would be like to command fleets in contemporary naval engagements. It draws on the Cold War face-offs between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but as a game system it is capable of modeling any contemporary naval situation. In fact, **Three-Sixty** plans to market Battle Sets which include scenarios from different navies around the globe. In other words, *Harpoon* is anything but a "bash-the-Russkies" game. It is a sophisticated, detailed rendering of the very essence of modern naval combat.



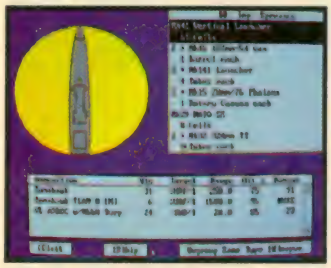
Click on Display to find out details about the Soviets' Victor II class of submarine. From here you can also get a sensors and weapons display which will help you stay out of the range of this vessel.

All of which would seem to point to a virtually unplayable game. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. With an extremely well-designed system of menus and dialogue boxes, *Harpoon* is every bit as playable as any naval strategy game you're likely to see.

The reason, quite simply, is focus. As in an increasing number of computer war games, *Harpoon* puts you in a specific command role. You control the fleet, leaving the menial tasks to your subordinates. The game allows you to take over some of these details, but you'll have plenty to do without them. After all, maneuvering fleets into interception range of enemy vessels and keeping track of several different groups of ships is more than enough for one person to handle.

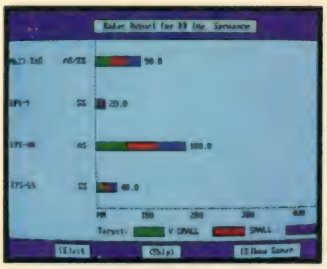
The main *Harpoon* screen is divided into four sections. A small window at top left shows the strategic map. Beside it, occupying the largest single window on the screen, is the group map, which you can view at four different zoom levels. This map is represented by a small rectangle on the strategic map.

The bottom left of the screen is occupied by the unit map (corresponding to a small rectangle on the group map), which allows you to focus upon individual ship groups. Here, too, you have four levels of zoom for increased detail. Finally, the bottom right contains the report window, the main control window for the game. Here you receive information, request information, set courses for your groups, and so on.



The weapons information screen for this ship shows all the available weapons as well as their field of fire. The MK41 missile can obviously be launched in any direction (as shown by the yellow circle), but other weapons are more restricted.

When you begin *Harpoon*,

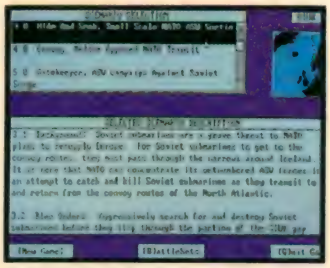


Learning how to use the sensor reports isn't exactly easy, but you won't get anywhere without doing so. You'll soon depend on these reports for information about the enemy.



Setting your course is a matter of using the mouse to draw new course "legs" on the map. Don't rely on the default courses because all will change as the battle progresses.

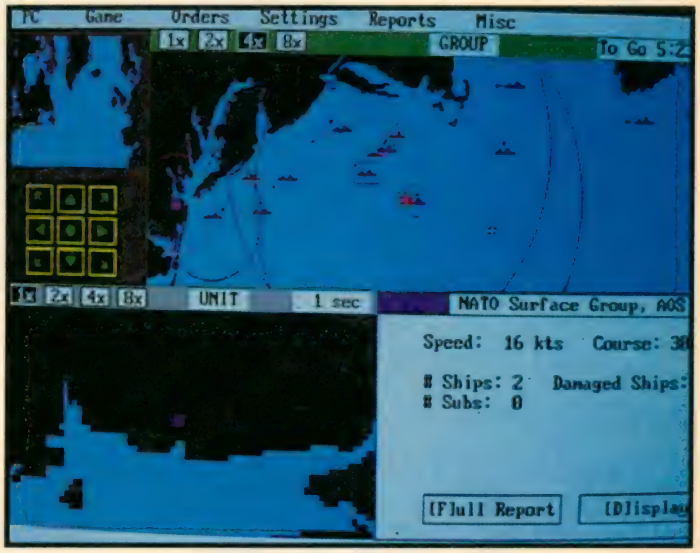
a series of screens leads you through scenario selection and setup. First, choose a battle set. One is included with the game — the Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap (GIUK) — and Three-Sixty has just released its second battle set, North Atlantic Convoys. Then you select from several play options. You can play either the NATO or the Warsaw Pact



Going back to the battle sets screen, click on the GIUK set, then choose scenario 3. As its name suggests, this battle is a small one, dependent on maneuver rather than force.

side (other combatants will be available in future modules), and you can activate or deactivate five different options.

Possible Nuclear Release brings nuclear weapons into the picture, demanding different strategies and tactics from you. The Snorkeling Submarines option lets you detect diesel subs more easily with radar and sensors, though your subs will be detected just as easily. Realistic Weather introduces a wealth of tactical complications, while Normal Maintenance Failures



By adjusting the set range circles menu, you can see the effective range of certain weapons and radar. This kind of display can be of immense help in choosing your plan of attack.

forces you to realize that Murphy's Law is not just a land statute. Finally, Start With Full Ordinance lets you decide whether or not to play under realistic logistics conditions, in which you can easily enter battle without crucial weapons and supplies.

From here it's on to the specific scenarios. The first three in the GIUK battle set, Dawn Patrol, Gauntlet, and Hide and Seek, are small and easily played; they act as introductions to the game. The next three are more complex, with additional ships and aircraft. The last six (there are 12 in all) are difficult, and you should know the game well before attempting them. Check the scenario window for background information on any of these, as well as for your orders and a number of suggestions.

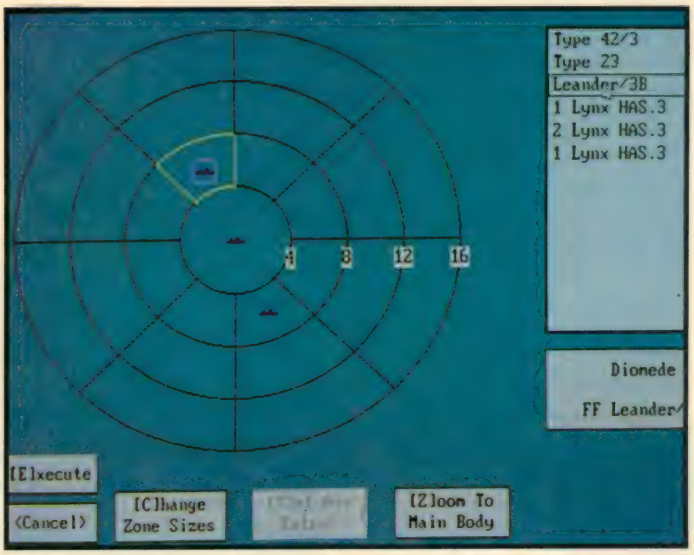
TAKING THE HELM

Once the game begins, you're faced with a bar consisting of five menus: game, setting,



Your two surface groups begin the scenario just north of Iceland. The circles show your effective weapons range.

reports, orders, and miscellaneous. The game menu lets you pause the game, start a new one, save or load games, and track your progress. From the setting menu you can choose several game options, mostly deciding which animations you wish to see on screen



Harpoon *even lets you edit the formations of your task groups. Doing so allows you to use your own tactical knowledge to fight battles.*



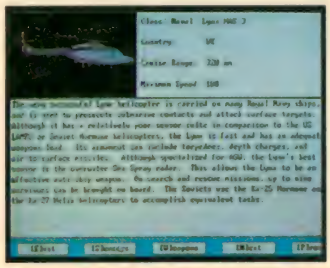
Working your sensors to their best advantage is vital in this game. Here you should choose intermittent, which will help you find subs and warn you of approaching weapons, but which won't give away your position.

(they're colorful, but time consuming). From here you also choose your staff options (letting you control how much the staff does on its own) and useful items such as time compression (anything from realtime to highly compressed). The reports menu offers a wide range of reports.

As you might expect, the heart of the game is the orders menu. Here, you order your men to attack enemy groups; you activate sensors and radar; you join groups together and split them apart; and you ready and then launch available aircraft. You can also set the course of each group from the orders menu (including the speed and "legs" of the course) and set the altitude of aircraft and the depth of submarines. You can even edit the formation of the group as you see fit, thereby adopting unique tactics according to individual situations.

Surprisingly, none of this is hard to do. The manual comes with detailed strategic notes, and an accompanying booklet gives you tactical "do's" and "don't's." The best way to learn what's going on, though, is simply to jump in and play the game. Your staff lets you know when you've achieved contact with the enemy, and in many cases a dialogue box lets you close in and attack without having to do any real menu manipulation.

Dialogue boxes even control the time compression, so you can opt for top speed at all times, knowing that battle will slow things down anyway. You should speed up the game until first contact is reported, then choose a group on the map and change its course to move it toward that contact. Once you're in range, order the attack. A few times through the first scenario should give you all the experience you need.



This screen shows information about the Lynx helicopter. The important issues are its range and its speed. Both are fairly good, but you need to be closer to maximize your chances.



Once you've spotted a contact, check your range and launch your aircraft. The aircraft can help you eliminate the enemy as quickly as possible.

Harpoon is a strong game, but its strongest point may well be its supremely attractive information displays. At any point in game play, you can ask for information about a class of ship or aircraft, and the request yields some highly informative and graphically detailed screens. You can get an overhead or side view of the ship type so that you can check



The information screen at the bottom right shows that your helicopters have zeroed in on a submarine. Since you've already ordered the attack, they'll do the best they can.



Now that you've found an Akula-class Soviet attack submarine, it's time to try a torpedo. The last thing you want is to tangle with this thing.

its sensor and weapons systems. After playing even one scenario of *Harpoon*, you'll know more about modern naval warfare than you probably ever wanted to know — and there seems no end to the information available. Each weapons system, to cite just one detail, is graphically displayed according to its field of fire out from the ship. Other displays offer similar specifics.

As a simulation, *Harpoon* is absorbing. It's also fairly slow. If you want to know what modern naval military systems are all about, here's your starting point. And if the system progresses as Three-Sixty clearly intends, you're bound to learn a great deal more — even if there is no longer a threat of war between Us and Them.

GP



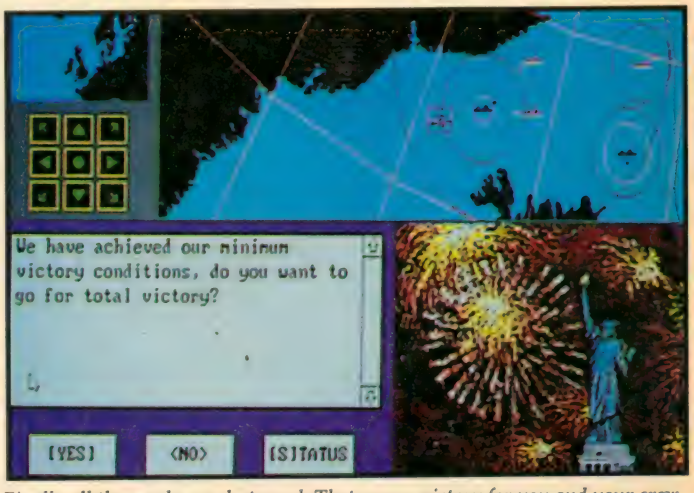
A couple of your torpedoes have missed, but one finally hits the sub. Sometimes getting a hit requires more luck than skill, but take it however you can get it.



Whoops. Don't be so concerned with beating up on the sub that you forget the sub can just as easily beat you. It won't be easy to evade these two approaching torpedoes.



Evasion tactics have brought you within range of a Kilo-class diesel sub. A couple of shots can send it to the bottom of the sea — once and for all.



Finally all three subs are destroyed. That means victory for you and your crew. Nice work for a beginner, but soon the scenarios get much, much harder.

Hardware requirements: 640K; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.



Silent Service II *offers some of the most attractive VGA graphics ever lavished on a simulation.*

Silent Service II

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

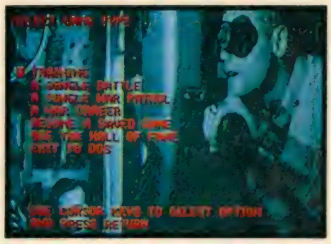
While movie sequels seldom stack up to the originals, the reverse is more often true in the computer gaming field. The prevalence of faster, more powerful PCs, the accessibility of superior color graphics, the evolution of smoother and friendlier interface concepts—all of these give rise to game sequels that are often dramatic improvements over the original programs.

Case in point: *Silent Service II* from **MicroProse**. When Sid Meier's original *Silent Service* was released in 1985, it was a critical and popular success. Many aficionados still consider it the finest military simulation ever for eight-bit computers.

In early 1989, MicroProse's president, Bill Stealey, decided to commission a remake, one that would take advantage of the greater memory and power of contemporary 16-bit hardware. In particular, *Silent Service II* was to be designed to showcase the full capabilities of 256-color VGA graphics.

In this design objective, MicroProse has certainly succeeded. *Silent Service II* virtually *defines* the state of the art for PC graphics. The first time you train a periscope on a Japanese target, you'll be astonished at the realism achieved by graphics designer Kim Biscoe. Gone are the generic polygon shapes of yore — in their place are highly detailed, finely shaded classes of ships.

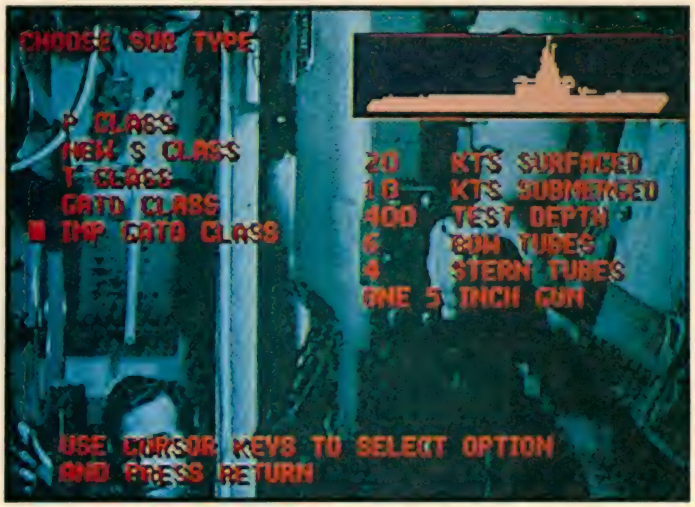
To achieve this kind of breathtaking realism, MicroProse took thousands of photographs of detailed 1/700th-scale tabletop models, then used complicated scaling algorithms to convert the resulting artwork into images that, when viewed through the periscope or bridge binoculars, look astoundingly like real Japanese ships.



You can choose from a wide variety of missions, from single battles that last 20-30 minutes to entire careers that may take 100 hours or more to play.



Plot your war time patrols on this strategic map, which shows the locations of all friendly and hostile naval bases.



You choose the class of the sub you'll command. The Gato or improved Gato classes offer the best all-around combination of speed and firepower.

Full use of color, too, is made for enhanced dramatic effect and realism. Fires, explosions, and shell splashes are all vividly rendered, and some of the night battle scenes are spectacular. Just wait until you see the *Yamato* looming out of the darkness just outside of Truk Harbor — a vast black mountain of steel, majestic, sinister, and seemingly unsinkable.

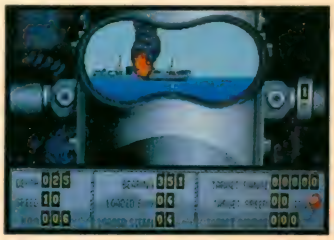
Both interface and documentation are excellent. Few simulations of this scale and complexity are so wonderfully easy to slide into. Anyone who has ever seen World War II submarine movies can glance at the clean, logical keyboard overlay and master the game's basic controls in about 20 minutes. The challenge lies not in *figuring out* the program, but in the tactics and techniques of stalking, sinking, or evading enemy ships.

TAKE YOUR PICK

It's easy to see that a great deal of thought has gone into the difficulty levels of *Silent Service II*. Because submarine tactics are so specialized, and the possible battle scenarios are so varied, the introductory level is definitely recommended for beginners—even though most players will soon be ready to handle higher levels.



CINCPAC periodically updates you on events in the Pacific Theater. Some of these messages may influence your decisions as commander.



You may indeed encounter targets on your way to or from the actual patrol zone—this unescorted freighter made a perfect target for the last two torpedoes on board.



When the smaller white rectangle reaches the big black one, your patrol begins. Keep an eye on your fuel consumption and leave more than enough for the return voyage.

At the introductory level, you can get killed by slow reactions or glaring tactical blunders, but the level of risk is generally quite manageable. Japanese convoys don't zigzag, your torpedoes never misfire, and your puny five-inch deck gun packs enormous destructive wallop. As compensation for these advantages, the scoring is commensurately low for any victories achieved.

On the normal level, the enemy is somewhat more skillful and aggressive, and your sub is realistically vulnerable to damage. The advanced level is designed to reflect the perils and challenges faced by actual World War II skippers — most players will need to work up to it gradually.

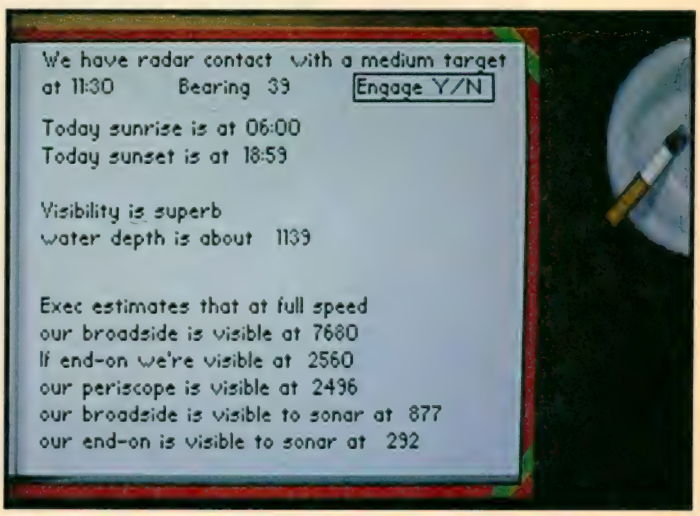
On the easy and intermediate levels, you can choose between "flawless" and "historical" torpedoes. If you're a stickler for realism and choose the latter, you'll have to endure the frustration of seeing juicy targets sail blithely away with nothing to show from their encounter with your sub except a few black and blue scratches.

You'll soon become proficient in basic submariner's tactics, learning how to hide from enemy sonar beneath thermal layers, when to go for the fake-out by shooting a cloud of debris from your tubes, or when it's safe to come up and finish off small or damaged targets with your deck gun. Wasting torpedoes is frowned upon — and bad strategy as well. You never know what targets may pop up just as soon as you run out of tin fish.

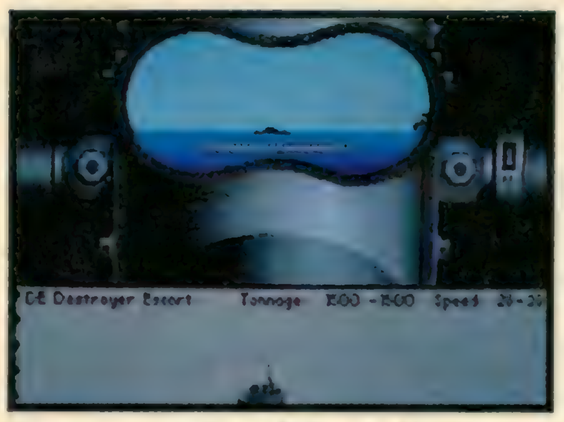
Conning your sub into battle is sometimes tricky, but it is mostly a matter of common sense. If, for example, you're tracking a convoy moving north at 13 knots, and visibility is only 9,000 yards, you can swing out to 10,000 yards, then crank up your surface speed to 20 knots. Eventually you're able to make a parallel run around the enemy's flank and get into good position for a torpedo ambush.

In real life, of course, submarine captains often spent many hours stalking their prey, setting up for that perfect salvo. Fortunately, *Silent Service II* gives you a time compression key that lets you make elaborate maneuvers in minutes.

Plotting a torpedo shoot is easy. Just remember the difference between "heading" (the direction your ship is pointing) and "bearing" (the direction in which you are looking). MicroProse even in-



When a patrol contact is made, the screen displays all pertinent information about range, visibility, and size of target. Whether to engage, however, is your decision.

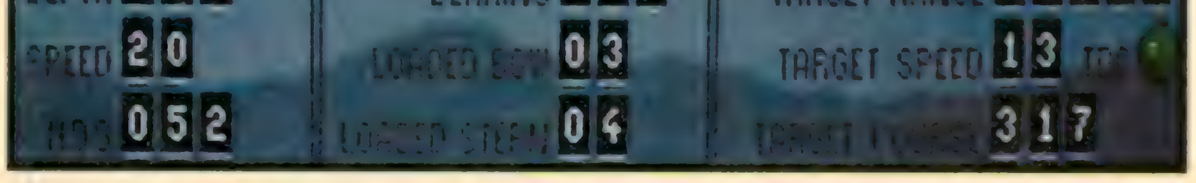


Any target viewed through the periscope can be identified by calling up the Ship ID Book and flipping through its entries.

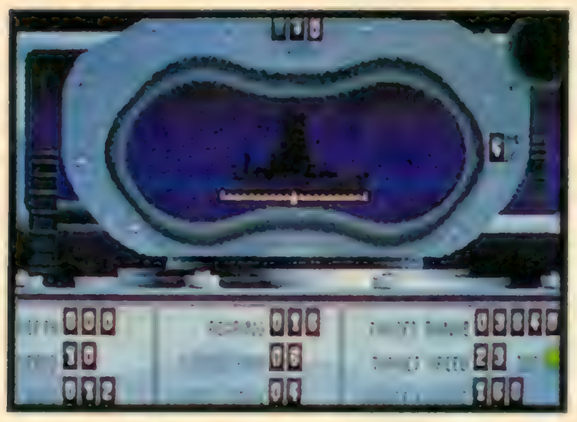
cludes a keystroke that lets you turn the vessel to match the view, or vice versa. The mathematics of a firing are handled painlessly by your TDC (Torpedo Data Computer) — all you have to do is mark the target through either the periscope or the bridge binoculars, then make sure you're within range.

If you're a Luddite, or if your TDC happens to get damaged in combat, there are full instructions for figuring a manual torpedo shoot as well. A bit of graph paper may come in handy for this kind of plotting, but rest assured that the TDC does a more-than-adequate job of aiming.

Or if you're feeling really cocky, you can try the "ultimate" level. At this setting, the Japanese seem telepathic as well as ferocious, your sub may suffer from hidden construction flaws, and a good number of your torpedoes are duds. MicroProse admits that this setting is "harder than real life," and many players will, indeed, find it suicidal. Still, like Mt. Everest, it's *there*. If you manage to become jaded by the three easier levels, you always have the option of pushing your skills and luck to their outer limits.



The deck gun is an economical way to sink a ship when used against small or damaged targets. It's even possible — though not likely — to defeat a single destroyer in one-on-one combat.



Here's the most awesome target you can face: the super-battleship Yamato, *looming out of the darkness like a sinister moun-*



Here's a blunder: Trying to get a fish into that carrier with a stern-shot is virtually impossible. For his incompetence, this sub skipper got blown out of the water by the escorts.

SAILING INTO ACTION

Once you've mastered the basics and blasted a few rusty hulks on the training range, you'll want to go into action. It's probably best to start with individual battle scenarios, and *Silent Service II* offers a good sampling of engagements based on the historic careers of several leading American sub commanders. These pit you against individual targets or whole convoys under various conditions of visibility and water depth.

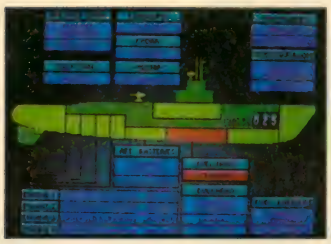
The manual offers valuable tactical advice to help you get started, as well as providing an account of what actually happened in the historic engagement so that you can compare your results with the real ones.

Probably the most fasci-



Nighttime surface engagements feature some of the game's most spectacular graphics.

nating of all these one-shot battles is the "Sink the Yamato" scenario. A night action, this scenario recreates an encounter on Christmas Day in 1943 between the U.S.S. *Skate* and the battleship *Yamato*. The *Yamato*, the pride of the Imperial Japanese Navy, was the largest and most powerful warship ever built (her main battery consisted of 18.1-inch guns!).



Access this screen to determine the extent of damage you've sustained. Sometimes the crew can effect repairs, enabling you to stay on patrol.

The drama of this encounter is heightened, simply because there was no more prestigious target in the Pacific — every sub skipper worth his stripes wanted a crack at the *Yamato*, though the ship's armor was so massive that multiple torpedo hits would be needed even to slow it down.

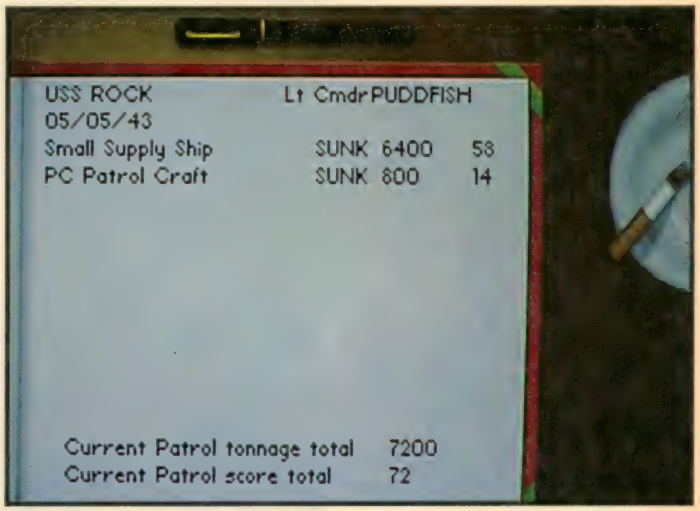
Nobody was sure if the vessel *could* be sunk by torpedoes, in fact, so there's a tremendous extra challenge built into this scenario. In reality, the battleship was hit by two torpedoes that Christmas, but the damage was so trivial that she didn't even slow down. Lotsa luck.

There is also a "random encounter" option for the individual battle scenarios, in which the computer throws you a new and different situation each time you select that mode. Sometimes you find your periscope filled with tankers; other times it's a single big carrier with a powerful escort.

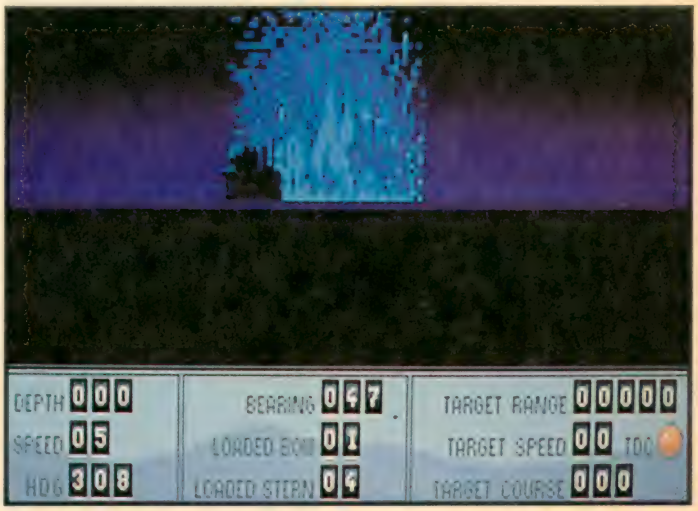
It might be a troopship convoy bound for the Solomon Islands with reinforcements for Guadalcanal — or you could find yourself staring at the bow-wake of an angry destroyer at such close range that all you can do is dive, try to evade his depth charges, and hope for a chance at him later.

Once you've explored the individual battles, you can go on extended patrols, starting from Midway, Pearl Harbor, or Australia. The manual and the full-color map that comes with it provide a complete rundown on where the best hunting can be found at every stage of the war.

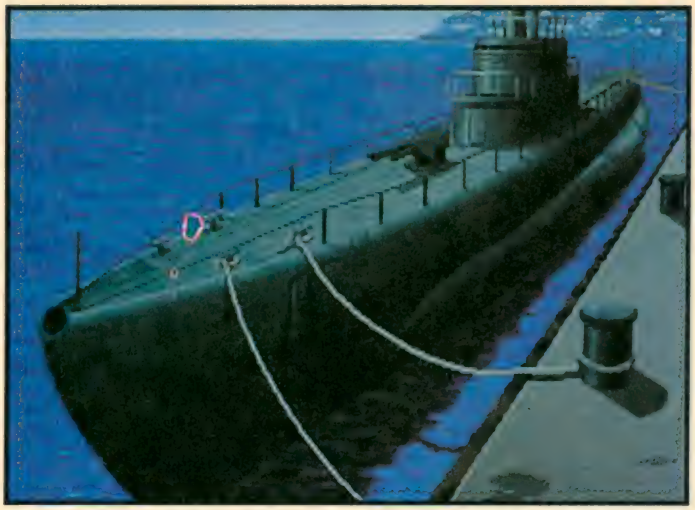
Patrols are run according to strictly realistic parameters — you have only so much fuel



After each battle, your log is updated to show the results.



If you opt for the finest degree of realism, a good percentage of your torpedoes will be duds or misfires, putting a dent, rather than a hole, in the enemy vessel.



When the patrol is over, return to base for shore leave, while the yard crews repair and resupply your sub. You may get a chance to command a newer vessel, too.

for getting to your patrol zone, for snooping around, and for getting back. A wise skipper always notes how much fuel he used getting *to* the patrol zone, and when the remaining supply reaches 150 percent of that figure, heads for home. This way, there's an extra "cushion" of fuel in case you suffer damage to your fuel tanks during an attack.

Whether you choose a single battle or a far-flung patrol, you have the option of



Unsatisfactory performance brings a gentlemanly but stern letter from CINCPAC — this won't help your service record.

selecting any date you like — starting, of course, with December 7, 1941. Note that if you choose a patrol in 1942, you get stuck with a slow, poorly armed, obsolete vessel, and if you choose any date after January 1945, you're not likely to find many targets — the American submarine campaign was a smashing success in 1944.

The ultimate challenge of *Silent Service II* is the "war career" mode. On this setting, you "join" the U.S. Navy on any date you specify (the week after Pearl Harbor would be the most suitable) and pursue an entire career, starting on an older type of boat and getting to serve on new, improved vessel classes as they become historically available.

You go on scores of patrols, encountering a host of unpredictable dangers, opportunities, and frustrations. You can be decorated, promoted, or chastised by your superiors, depending on your luck and performance. The career scenario runs until either the war ends or you get killed.

These simulations can run into hundreds of hours of play, and, don't forget, you can undertake them on four levels of difficulty. When you take all of its options into account, *Silent Service II* really offers the game player a lifetime of submarine action.

The manual includes good background history, thorough data on battle tactics and patrol strategies, and lots of attractive illustrations and diagrams. It's as much a pleasure to read as the simulation is to play.

Silent Service II is an epic simulation, containing an almost inexhaustible range of exciting possibilities. Graphically, it's attractive enough to send a lot of PC owners out to purchase that VGA board they've been putting off buying. It's been designed with the utmost in care, user-friendliness, and creative flair. Hats off, MicroProse — you've created a masterpiece!

GP



On the other hand, a very unsatisfactory patrol brings condolences to your kin back in the States, and a watery grave for the hapless skipper.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for VGA); VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional; supports sound boards.



When Ultima VI *opens, you're in your home on earth. As you click through the multitude of mindless TV programs, you realize how much you miss the adventure-filled days of your quests in Britannia.*

Ultima VI: The False Prophet

NEIL RANDALL

The *Ultima* series holds something of a mystique among computer gamers. From its introduction in the early 80s, *Ultima* has been known as a fantasy series to be played only by those who knew their way around fantasy games. In other words: Only experts need apply. Whether or not the games were really that difficult didn't matter. The perception was there, and that was all that counted.

Part of the reputation was deserved. *Ultima III* was an extremely long game, and casting magic spells in it was more difficult than the gaming world had seen. But beginning with *Ultima IV*, series designer Richard Garriott (Lord British himself) introduced an innovative character-creation system in which players were asked to solve a set of dilemmas that would determine the personality of their characters.

Ultima V demonstrated how complex Garriott could make his well-honed game system, and many players are still trying to reach the end of that highly challenging quest.

Now *Ultima VI* has been released, and this most recent game in the series tries to do two things. First, it breaks free from the series' programming dependence on the Apple II line of computers, which limited the memory and graphics of the adventures. Second, it aims for dramatically increased playability. As long as he was rethinking his programming, Garriott decided to change some of the interface as well. *Ultima VI* is almost completely playable with a mouse, and some of the early tried-and-true *Ultima* command structure is gone. In its place is an interface more easily learned than those in the first five *Ultimas*.



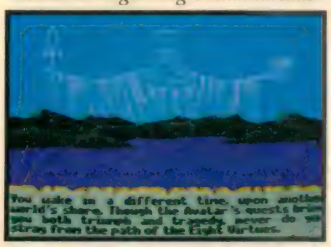
During the fierce storm, lightning touches the ground. This, too, reminds you of Britannia. The power of nature in that land was truly formidable.



The storm has called you, and you have answered. You run toward the stones outside your house, braving the rain and lightning. Britannia calls.



A mysterious stone appears from outside the stone circle. You take it, wondering what it has to do with the storm, the circle, or your calling.



No sooner do you arrive in Britannia than you encounter danger. Did you think you would actually be able to begin a quest so soon?



The red door was a portal to Britannia. And now your character must face the gypsy's questions. Your traits are decided by how you answer her ethical dilemmas, but you have no way of knowing how the choices affect you until you play the game.

BEHIND THE RED MOONGATE

When you begin *Ultima VI*, you are taken through a series of beautifully drawn screens (especially in the VGA version) leading you from this world into the land of Britannia. Along the way, you'll find yourself in a gypsy hut, giving the answers to several ethical dilemmas to determine your character's personality. Don't try to second-guess the computer here — there's rarely a right or wrong answer to the questions. Simply answer as your character would, and you'll have done your job.

Once past character creation, the introduction shows



As you're about to become the victim of a cruel sacrifice, you begin to wonder how much worse this adventure can get.

several screens which advance the story. Listen carefully to learn the central story of *Ultima VI*, the threat of the gargoyles. Finally, leap through a red moongate (the most powerful form of travel in Britannia) and find yourself standing with three friends in the throne room of a castle. Lord British himself is waiting to answer your questions.

By talking to Lord British, you learn of the danger facing Britannia. He links your new quest to those of *Ultima IV* and *V*, but it's not necessary to have played those games to play this one. After you've answered his questions, talk to the mage and the guard who stand with Lord British. The guard offers advice on where you should go, and the mage offers an important clue you'll need to succeed in this game — there's something you brought with you from your own world that you'll need in the course of your quest. Lord British will explain the item's significance.



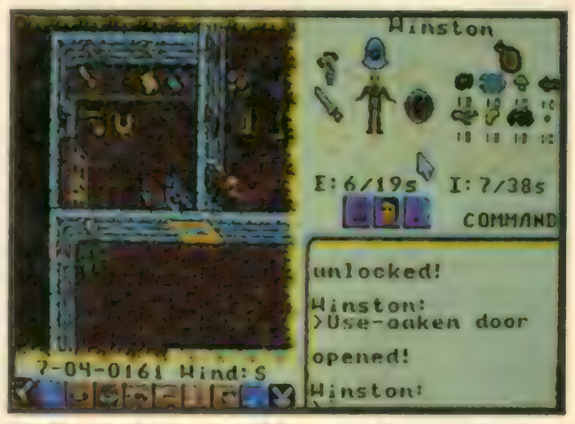
By talking to Lord British, you determine the purpose of your quest. Type in the words that appear in red when you're asked to say something. You'll get more information this way.

As with all the elements of the interface, there are two ways to talk to a character. The first is to click on the Talk icon, listed on the line of command icons at the bottom of the screen, then click on the character with whom you wish to converse. The second way is to type T, then press the directional key that points to the character. Some people respond automatically, but others need prompting. Try typing Name and Job to get them started. Often, these prompts yield several words which appear in a different color from the rest. Typing these words in turn results in new information, since the characters are usually eager to talk about them.

Lord British also explains that you are free to use anything you find in his castle. He means it, so take advantage of the offer. He has even set aside



By pressing V, you can see an overhead map of the immediate vicinity. The small white square in the middle of the screen represents you, here in conference with Lord British. Use this view often, if only to find buildings off your main path.

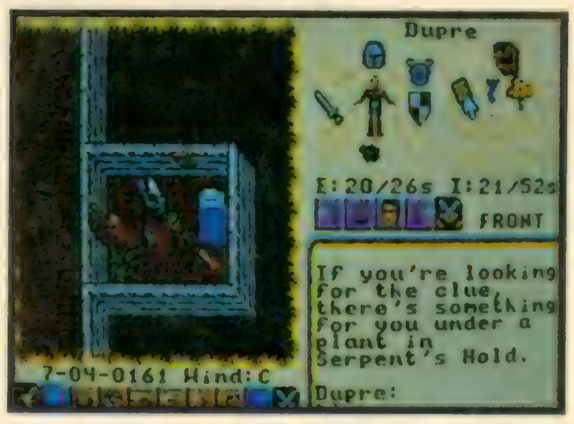


Collect chests and bags whenever you can. They're heavy, but they're easier to carry than a lot of individual items. Inside Lord British's room, check to see what's inside this bag — if you're lucky, you'll get some objects necessary for casting spells.

a room for you through the doors to the west of the throne room door. Inside this room is a wealth of useful items, including a sack of magical reagents and a chest with a weapon, a shield, and other items. Take the spell book as well; you'll need it later. And don't forget that the other members of the party can carry items as well.

COMMAND AND DELIVER

Getting through the door demands the first of many applications of the versatile Use command. Stand in front of the door, click on Use, and then click on the door. Or type U and press the appropriate directional key. The door will open unless it is locked, in which case you must first use a key on it. Click Use, click on the key in your inventory, and then click on the door — or type U, press the Tab key to get to your inventory, press the arrow keys to get to the key,



Just down the hall is a room with a chest. Check inside it for an important clue. Of course, you still have to journey to the Serpent's Hold, but you'd have to do that anyway.

press Return, and then use the appropriate arrow key to point to the door.

Ultima VI's Use command is your way of opening and unlocking doors and chests, climbing up or down ladders, mounting and dismounting horses, entering and exiting ships, lighting torches, and making use of any special item you may be carrying. You should make an effort to understand its implementation early.



Throughout Ultima VI, you encounter characters of many descriptions. This jester promises a clue, but bear in mind that the guy tells jokes for a living. Beggars are rarely more helpful.

Another essential command icon is Get. When you find an item you want, click on Get and then on the item you wish to pick up. Or type G and use the appropriate arrow key. If there's an item in a pile you don't want, click on the Move icon (or type M), then on the item itself. Respond to the

"Move where?" question by clicking on a location on the display, or by pressing the arrow key in the direction you want to move the object. Note that you can also push people aside with the Move command, but some of them might not like rough treatment.

Once you find your sword and shield, you must ready them. Search through your goods by clicking the inventory button on the status display (or pressing Tab), then click on the sword and the shield to make them ready (or move the cursor to each item and press Return). To unready them later — if you want to use a torch instead, for example — click on them again. Note that you must ready spell books and other items before using them as well as weaponry.



Now that you've found weapons and shields that you like, it's time to consider climbing down into the castle's lower levels. Be sure you have a torch, though — you'll need it.

Controlling your inventory is important. You can only carry so much, and the more you carry, the slower you go and the more tired you get. Besides, you have a limited number of slots in which you can place items. You can free up slots by Moving items inside chests or bags, or by Moving them to other characters. To do the latter, click on the Move icon, click again on the item to be moved, and then on the character on the action display.

For the most part, the command line refers to you, not to the other characters in the party. There are times, though, when you want direct control over the other characters. Sometimes, for instance, you'll want someone else in the party to pick up an item. Other times, it will be necessary to move a character out of your way. Gaining this control means moving into solo mode, and is accessed by using the number keys on the top row of the keyboard. Press 1 to have your character act on his or her own. Press 2 to control the second character, 3 for the third, and so on.

While in solo mode, no other character can do anything, so make sure to switch back to party mode when you're finished by pressing 0 (zero). Interestingly enough, you can't enter ships or ascend or descend ladders in the solo mode. If you did, you could split up the party irrevocably.



Down on the third level, there's a walkway leading to a small island where a skiff awaits your commands. Use it to cross the water if you're ready to take the risk.



You've managed to sail the skiff to a small island in the middle of an underground lake. Take the ladder you see down to yet another level.



Crossing a walkway on the third underground level, the party encounters a cyclops and his minions. This is the first serious test in combat, but large rewards are waiting.



After the battle with the cyclops, the floor is littered with corpses and weapons. Spears and throwing axes are there for the taking — and selling.



You can rest for the night to regain strength while in the wilderness. Be sure to post a guard, though, or you might be killed before awakening.

AN EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BRITANNIA

Once you've left the throne room, it's time to do some exploring. Across the hall from your room is Lord British's chamber. Like your own room, it contains handy items, and you won't be penalized for taking them. While you're there, use the telescope. It won't tell you much (at this point in the game, anyway), but it demonstrates the game's enormous commitment to detail. Then it's off westward and southward down the halls to other rooms. In the southwest corner of the castle you'll find a ladder leading down, but don't use it yet. You have other things to find first.



By placing the orb of the moons in the right location, Winston causes a red moongate to appear. When he steps through it, he will be ... well, why not try it?

There's an intriguing barracks to the east of the main entryway — and a mysterious locked door as well. You can still look around by clicking on the Look icon (or typing L) and then on the item you want to search (a night table, maybe?). When you've found the key, go on through the door. Then search all the chests — you may as well use the best arms and armor you can. Remember, anything you find is yours for the taking. You won't be accused of stealing until after you leave the castle.



The red moongate has led to this mysterious place in the mountains. A guardian stands watch over the pass.



The horses you find at the blacksmith's help you journey faster and easier. But they cost a great deal of money — and stealing is not a recommended action.



You need a ship to take you to many locations in the game. But a ship's deed is required to use a ship, and only a shipwright has one.



With the ship's deed in hand, your party prepares to embark on a journey across the water. Its destination is the Lycaeum, but you'll find other adventures before you arrive.



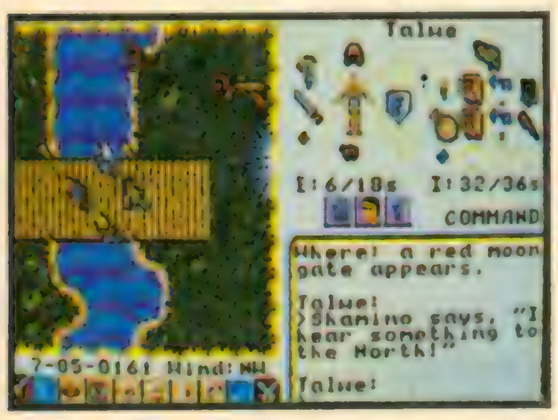
Here on the high seas, the ship is in danger of an attack from a giant squid and two sea serpents. It may not be a desperate fight, but it will certainly be difficult.



Navigate carefully as you sail up this river. North of here, you might be able to find a fighter willing to join the expedition. Short of that, you need to find food and — if you're lucky — gold.

Finally, it's time to head down one of the ladders. Face the ladder, click on Use, then on the ladder itself. The party descends and the scene shifts. Unready your shield and use a torch (there are some in a chest) to brighten up the picture. Then explore the sewers, making maps as you go. When you find a ladder leading down, take it and be prepared for adventure. Down here, you find a few cyclops, headlesses, and trolls to fight — as well as a depressing number of rats and mice.

Your goal is to find a ladder leading to the third level. Once there, you can spot a skiff attached to a dock. Use the skiff to float across the water to a small island on which is another ladder, this one leading to the fourth level. Once you've descended, there's a great deal to do, and substantial rewards to be earned.



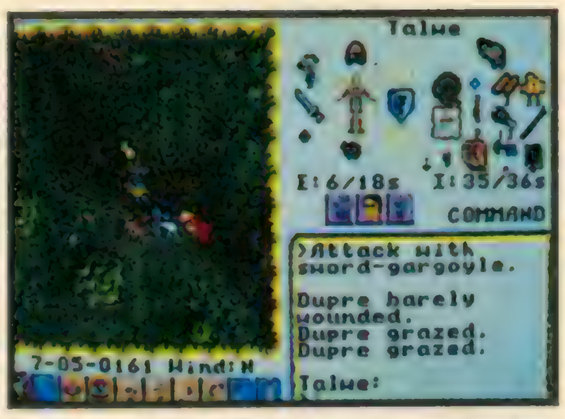
Two trolls wait for you across the bridge. A sign is pointing to your next destination, but the trolls must be defeated first. Just hope they have treasure.

Inevitably, you're going to enter combat. Your character can attack in any mode (just click on the Attack icon or type A), but to ready the other members of the party you must click on the Begin Combat icon (or type B). Before you enter combat, set each character's combat mode from the inventory display. It's possible to take control over each character in combat, but for the most part you won't want to. The computer controls them ably, and you have enough to do maneuvering your own character. Remember that different weapons have different effects, though, and that magic is always possible.

Using magic is an art in itself. You throw spells with the Cast icon, either in or out of combat, but you must have the required number of magic points and the right mix of magical reagents. You also need a readied spell book. You won't have a lot of use for magic early in the game, but learn how to cast spells anyway. You'll need them soon enough.



Your party has stumbled on some guards fighting a trio of headlesses. This fight should be easy, and maybe the guards will want to join your adventurers.



In the north of Britannia, you find a group of gargoyles. This early in the game, the gargoyles are too strong for your party. Your best bet is to find an alternate route.

Eventually, you'll find your way out of the dungeons and back into the castle proper. Rest and eat, then head into the town of Britain. If you have enough money, buy some horses or obtain a deed for a ship. Far to the east is Verity Isle, on which rests the great Lycaeum. Here you can find vital information and important people with whom to talk. If you have horses, you can cover distances quickly and find a few new members for your party.

Britannia is big, its inhabitants are varied, and the number of things to accomplish is enormous. Since there is no prescribed order in which to take them on, you can feel free to explore. You should be prepared to spend hours scouting around, however, because, like all the *Ultimas*, this sixth edition is anything but quick. But *unlike* the earlier ones, it is quite easy to play and even better to look at. Just remember that Control-S saves the game and that the moongates take you to other fascinating lands. That information and a little luck is all you'll need to finish this fine, fine game.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; hard disk optional but recommended; 10 MHz or faster computer recommended; mouse optional; supports sound boards.



At the beginning of the game, you're given some background information about how the war began. These informational screens appear throughout the game.

War of the Lance

NEIL RANDALL

Dungeons & Dragons came into being at about the same time as the first personal computers. Of course, almost nobody owned a computer at that time — not only because they were expensive, but also because there was little available software. But *a lot* of people owned Dungeons & Dragons, and the game created a very enthusiastic following.

Owning a computer became both possible and enjoyable with the advent of the Apple II, Commodore 64, and early Atari. It wasn't really surprising that D&D-type computer games hit the market shortly thereafter.

But before role-playing games were available for PCs, there were computer war games — which were among the first "simulations" attempted for home computers. Gary Gygax and David Arnasan, who designed the original Dungeons & Dragons, were war game designers before they hit on the idea of fantasy role playing. Their company, TSR (Tactical Studies Rules), still publishes the D&D line.

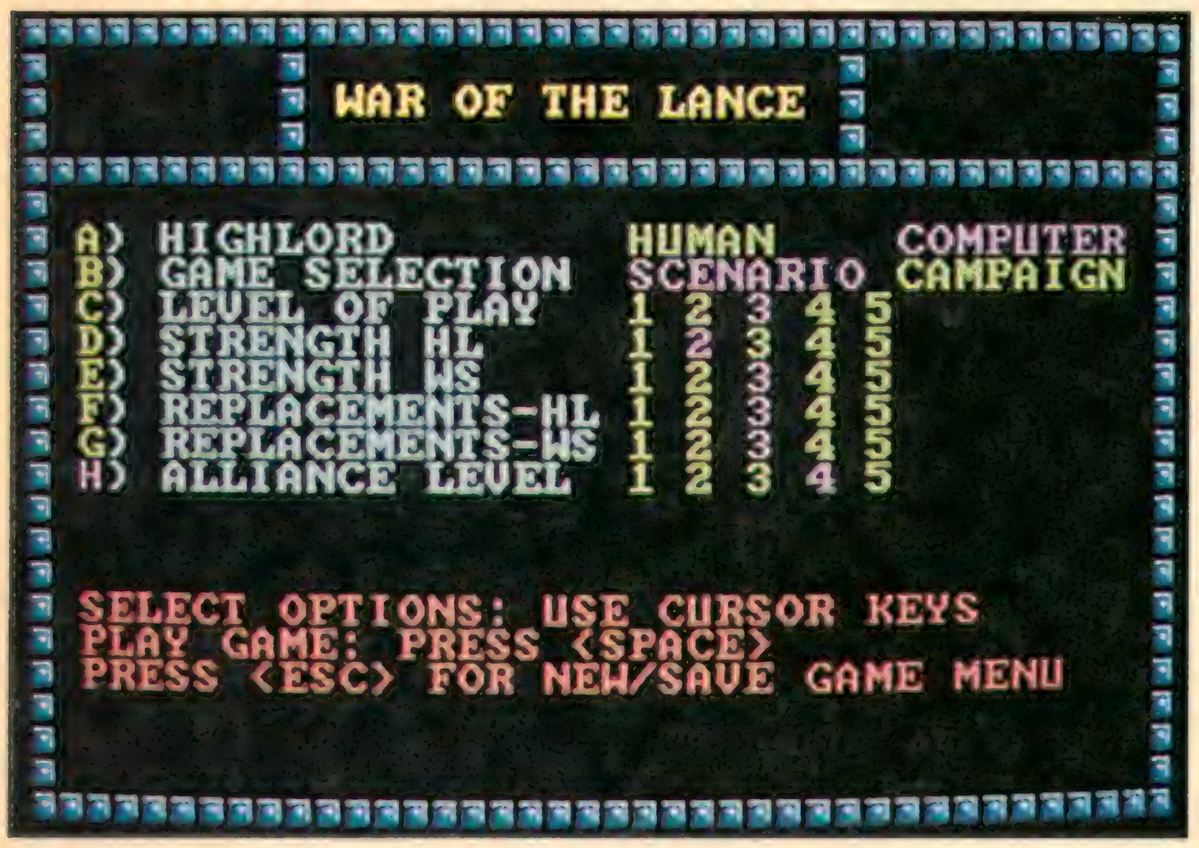
Before D&D, TSR published complex rules for military miniatures, and they published some board games as well. Once D&D took off, Gygax devoted all his time to role-playing games — but without his wargaming background, D&D would never have made it off the ground.

All of this background information is by way of introducing **SSI's** *War of the Lance*, the latest installment in the company's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons line. So far, four highly successful role-playing adventures (*Pool of Radiance*, *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, *Champions of Krynn*, and *Secret of the Silver Blades*) have been published under the AD&D title, as well as two utilities for the non-computer AD&D player, two less successful action games (*Heroes of the Lance*, *Dragons of Flame*), a low-complexity role-playing adventure (*Hillsfar*), and even an intriguing flight simulator (*DragonStrike*).

War of the Lance is a war game, pure and simple. In this game you command armies on a detailed map and follow complicated rules. In this sense, this game is a throwback to SSI's earliest days, when the company pioneered the computer war game.

In other words, just as AD&D itself has its roots in war games, so computer AD&D comes from a company which began with war games. And just as TSR continues to release war-game-type products to support AD&D, so SSI sees a market for war games supporting its own AD&D. Some things, it seems, just refuse to change.

If you've ever played an SSI wargame, you'll have no trouble getting into *War of the Lance*. Its closest relative is the company's recent — and superb — *Sword of Aragon*. But playing *Sword of Aragon* is no guarantee of success in the challenging *War of the Lance*. This new game, which casts you very clearly in the role of underdog, keeps you hopping even at its easiest levels.



If you want to keep the Highlord forces under computer control, you might want to lower their strength a bit and increase the Alliance's level.



As they search for magical artifacts, your heroes can be lost, killed, or wounded. There are three options when this happens.



Notice the variety of terrain on the map — including tunnel entrances in the mountains.

If you're an AD&D fan who's never played a SSI war game, give *War of the Lance* a try. Unlike a role-playing adventure, which looks at things from an individual or party's point of view, *War of the Lance* lets you move entire armies into battle. Instead of trying to clear a dungeon of monsters, your goal is to clear a continent of invaders. It's a different perspective, but many will find it a very attractive one.

AN INSURMOUNTABLE TASK

War of the Lance is set in the popular world of DragonLance. Takhisis, Queen of Darkness, has entered into an alliance with the Highlord allies based in Nereka. Led by the exiled evil dragons, these armies are powerful and merciless, and their only goal is dominion over the entire continent of Ansalon.



During the Reinforcements/Replacement phase of the game, your units can receive invaluable fortification forces. Without them, you don't stand a chance.

You lead the forces of Whitestone on an enormous task: Not only must you move your meager forces to block the Highlord alliance's advance, but you must also try to persuade other nations to ally themselves with you. Since few of them know that the Highlord alliance is on the move, and fewer still are willing to risk life and limb, your quest is almost doomed from the start.

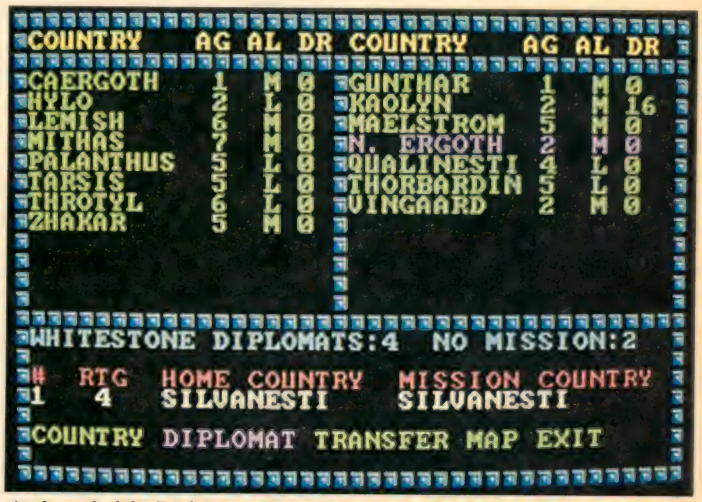
War of the Lance, therefore, is about diplomacy as much as it's about fighting. And, in keeping with the theme of the AD&D genre in general, it incorporates the opportunities for individual heroism. While the game is a little unusual, it's fairly easy to learn; before long, you'll be negotiating and fighting to your heart's content. You might not be winning very much, but that comes with practice.

You begin *War of the Lance* by customizing your game. Though you play the Whitestone player, the Highlord player can be controlled by either a human opponent or the computer. There are five possible setting adjustments for each level of play: strength of Highlord forces, strength of Whitestone forces, Highlord replacements, Whitestone replacements, and Alliance level.

For example, if you want the Alliance portion of the game to present the greatest challenge, you'd lower the Alliance level to one or two, then raise the Whitestone forces above the Highlord forces. Or if you want to be forced to conserve armies, lower the replacement levels. And so on.

The final choice you must make is whether to play a scenario or a campaign. The scenarios begin at various points during the war, with each side possessing forces and allies. In the campaign mode, you start with small forces and no allies, while the Highlord player starts with only Nereka as an ally. If you choose the campaign game, be prepared to spend your first several turns trying to cement alliances.

With all these options in place, the game is set to begin. Like almost all war games, *War of the Lance* is divided into phases — 18 in all, ranging from the Highlord Quest through Player-Two Combat. Difficult though it sounds, the phases pass quickly and easily



At the end of the Diplomatic phase, this screen offers a summary of the different countries' alliances.



You can send diplomats to selected countries from the second Alliance screen.

— primarily because those of the computer-controlled player don't really involve you. The Highlord computer player executes its Champion phase and Diplomatic phase on its own, for example, and during its Combat phase your only actions are to give brief defensive orders.

A FAMILIAR FIGHT

Experienced war game players will recognize the movement and combat phases. In the movement phase, you move all your units wherever you wish on the map, although they're subject to certain rules (e.g., dragons move much farther than infantry armies). If you move adjacent to enemy units, you may engage them in battle.

Another phase, common to all war games, is the one in which your armies receive reinforcements and replacements. And, as in most war games, your units can coexist, or stack, in the same square.



The Victory Points screen shows the breakdown between Alliance and Highlord forces. Even at game's start, the score shows a Highlord victory. Your work is cut out for you.



North of our allied nation lies the Dwarven fort of Zhakar. The red shields represent Highlord forces.

War of the Lance, however, includes some facets not usually found in war games. The Diplomatic phase sees your statesmen zipping from country to country trying to forge alliances, while the Subversion phase lets you assign troops to disrupt enemy quests.

The Diplomatic phase is the more important of these two because achieving alliances lies at the very heart of this game. During this stage, you're given a list of all neutral nations. Beside each nation appears a series of three numbers. The first shows which nations are aligned (i.e., politically and philosophically) with either side. The second designates how strong the alliance is likely to be if it's successful, and the final number shows how many "diplomatic points" you already have in that country.

When you decide which country would make an ideal ally, begin sending your diplomats to work on this and other alliances by visiting foreign lands. If an alliance succeeds, you immediately gain command of that country's troops, and you can deploy them wherever you wish within their home country.

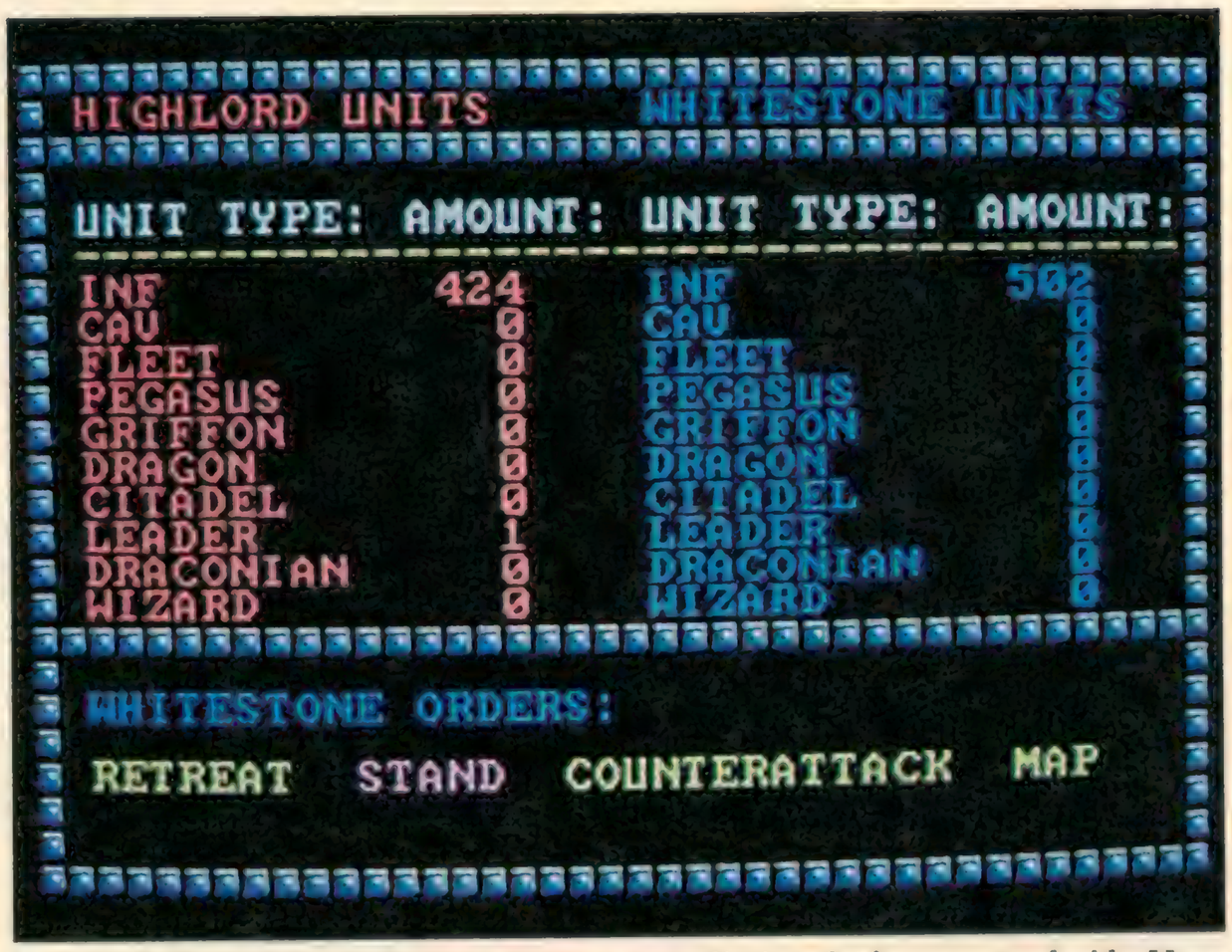


Maelstrom hexes are at sea. Your fleets should avoid these at all costs if they hope to remain afloat.

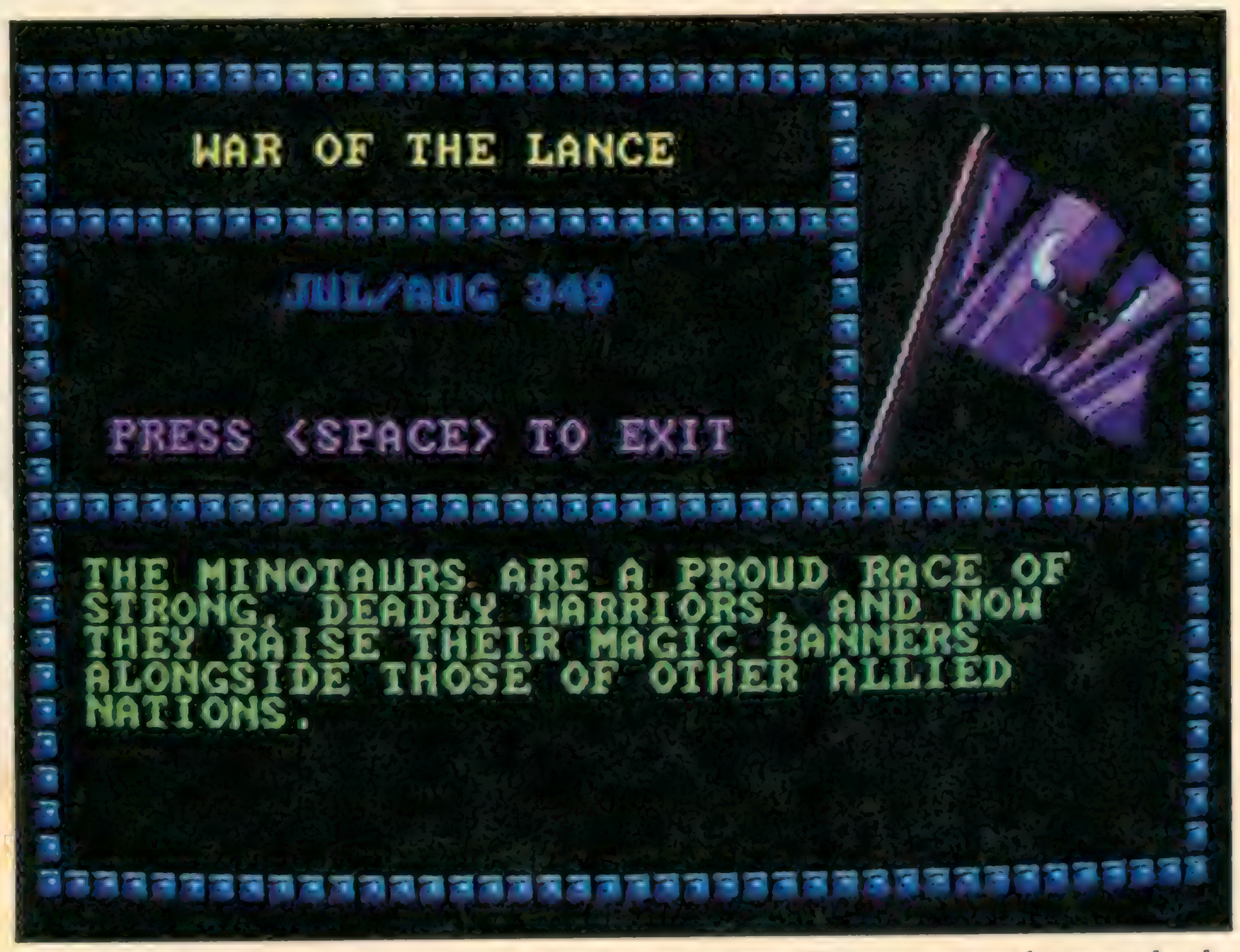
One other aspect of *War of the Lance* is completely unlike those found in most war games. In the Quest phase, you send your champions on pilgrimages for magical artifacts.



In the northwest corner of the continent lies North Ergoth, the country with which you're trying to form an alliance.



With each battle, you're shown a combat screen listing the forces on each side. Here you may outnumber the enemy army, but they have a leader — unlike you.

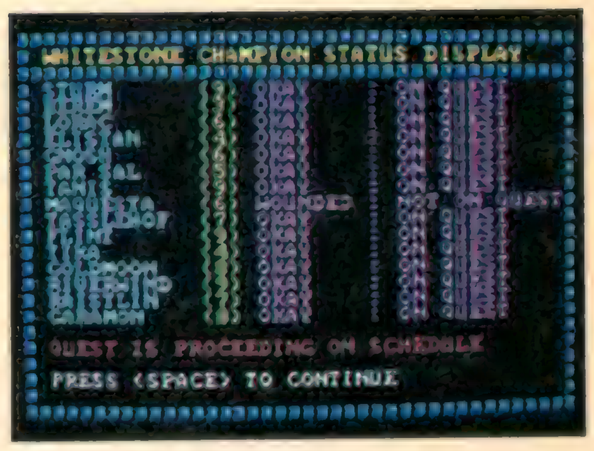


Information screens appear after turns are taken. This one reveals some background about the race of minotaurs.

They journey on these quests automatically, but in this phase you can help them if they're wounded or captured. If a champion is injured while he's with the rest of the questing party, you can withdraw the champion from the quest or have him leave the party and seek medical aid.

If the wounded hero is not currently on a quest, you can have him seek aid or rejoin the mission. When a champion is captured by the enemy, you can have him attempt an escape, try to rescue him, or leave him imprisoned for the time being.

The goal of a quest is to collect a magical artifact — such as the dragon orb — which can turn enemy dragons away from a battle. The Whitestone armies can find medallions of faith, which inspire your units, while the evil armies can use Dragon Lord armor. DragonLances double the combat strength of friendly units, but champions must find the pure dragon metal, the Hammer of Kharas, and the Silver Arm of Ergoth to make the DragonLances. There are other artifacts as well, and most are extremely valuable.



After each Quest phase, this screen updates the status of each champion. Most of these champions are on a quest — some never to return.

DRAGONLANCE FISTICUFFS

Champions are nice to have, but your armies and navies do your real fighting. There is human infantry in this game, but in keeping with the DragonLance world, there are also infantries for ogres, minotaurs, elves, dwarfs, kenders, and hobgoblins. Human cavalry exists, as does draconic cavalry, dragons themselves, pegasi, and griffins.

Then again, you might find yourself fighting a powerful wizard or a flying citadel (another DragonLance peculiarity). Furthermore, given the continental scope of the conflict, fleets are also highly important. Each different unit gains advantages in specific situations. Dwarfs and ogres, for example, are at their best when fighting in mountain squares.



When you "get" a unit, you can move it, attack with it, and so on. Study this screen for a synopsis of the unit's capabilities.

The combat stage begins only after the movement phase is over and you've moved each unit where you wish. The first battle you launch is naval combat, fought between adjacent fleets or, if at least one fleet is on patrol, between fleets within four squares of one another.

Next come land and air battles. For each such battle, the computer displays a screen showing the opposing forces and the menu items Retreat, Light, Heavy, Abort, and Map. Retreating means backing off before battle starts, and is subject to enemy counterattacks. Light and Heavy establish the ferocity of the attack. Aborting means abandoning the fight but remaining in place.

If you're on the defense, you're allowed to Retreat, Counterattack, or Stand. Forces containing dragons have a further menu—Dragon Fear or Attack — depending on how they wish to deploy their dragons. Finally, you're given the option of viewing a graphic display of the battle—enjoyable but time-consuming—or just having the computer present the grisly results.

War of the Lance can be a long game, but its continental scope keeps it interesting. Given that dragons can cover about half the map in one turn, the scope quickly becomes less of an advantage to the defender than it first seems, and you'll find yourself extremely thankful that the infantry is so slow to arrive.

The fascination of this game is its well-designed diplomatic subgame; at several points you'll end a turn almost begging certain nations to come over to your side. And SSI's attention to its audience is welcome: With champions on quests, magic artifacts providing aid, and dragons locked in battle with flying citadels, the vast readership of the DragonLance books will find themselves right at home.

Along with *Sword of Aragon*, *War of the Lance* is one of the most enjoyable pure war games to appear in quite some time.

GP



Two elvish fleets sail out of port to attack a Highlord amphibious force. Your fleets aren't as strong as theirs, but you do have a chance.



The elvish griffin forces try to help their troops against the Highlord attackers. Griffins are powerful, but not perfect.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; EGA or CGA graphics.



Action in the Norwegian fjords includes a chance to use your deck gun against shore installations — a nice touch.

Das Boot

WILLIAM R. TROTTER



The graphics in the main menu are outstanding. If the graphics in the rest of the game matched these, Das Boot *would be an unqualified success.*



The antiaircraft scenes are exciting — but tracers could use a more realistic look.

Germany started World War II with only a handful of modern submarines — so few that, for the first few months of the conflict, Admiral Doenitz could keep only a half-dozen boats at sea at any given time. Within a year, larger numbers of boats, together with improved "wolfpack" tactics, made the U-boats a deadly scourge. In early-to-mid 1943, the height of the U-boat campaign, the Nazi wolves were sinking Allied ships faster than they could be constructed, raising the spectre of starvation in Great Britain. Writing about that period in his memoirs, Winston Churchill later described the U-boat menace as "the only thing that ever really frightened me during the war."

After the summer of 1943, new technology and improved rates of ship construction tilted the balance increasingly in the Allies' favor. By the start of 1945, less than half of the submarines that left on patrol ever came back. Germany launched 820 U-boats during the war; 781 were destroyed in action, and 75 percent of their crews were killed.

Twenty years ago, Lothar Bucheim, who voyaged on U-boats as a young war correspondent, wrote a harrowing and only thinly fictional account of U-boat life titled simply *Das Boot* (*The Boat*). This book is beyond dispute the finest and truest account of submarine warfare in the North Atlantic ever penned. About 15 years later, the book was adapted into a magnificent film.

If you buy a copy of **Three-Sixty's** *Das Boot* simulation, you get a free copy of Bucheim's novel and a coupon that entitles you to a videocassette of the movie at a very agreeable price. Those are two good reasons, right off the bat, for buying the program.

Beyond that, it must be said that *Das Boot*, the simulation, is a mixture of excellence and shortcomings, and it can only be given a lukewarm recommendation. Its virtues are large, and obviously the product of much care, but they are compromised by a number of irritating flaws that nibble at the edges of the program like hungry fish.

UP 'SCOPE!

There are two main parts to the program. The first is a section of eight Baltic Training Missions. (Since the Russian navy was a negligible force, the Germans considered the Baltic Sea to be virtually a private lake, and conducted elaborate training exercises there with only rare interference from the Allies.) The second part of the program includes a variety of combat missions set in the Norwegian fjords, the Bay of Biscay, the Murmansk convoy routes, and the open seas of the North Atlantic.

On the Introductory difficulty setting, your torpedoes always explode, your boat can rapidly repair itself at sea, and you can use both surface and underwater external views to help you navigate through minefields and avoid depth-charge attacks.

On the Realistic setting, your odds of success are approximately the same as those faced by a real U-boat commander in the middle of World War II — in other words, not very good. Repairs can only be made back at the shipyard, and you no longer have external camera views. Three-Sixty has opted not to include a "career" mode of play. Given the mortality rate of U-boat skippers from 1943 on, this was probably a sound decision.

Control of the ship is

handled — easily with a mouse, in a somewhat complicated fashion with the keyboard — via an information panel at the bottom of the screen. Clicking on the various segments of that panel instantly takes you from the conning tower to the torpedo room to the radio room, and so on. From those locations, you can perform the logical and necessary functions of controlling, navigating, and doing battle with a U-boat.

There's quite a refreshing variety of missions. One thing *Das Boot* does, for instance, that no other computer submarine title even tries to simulate is anti-aircraft action. Depending on which model sub you choose to command, you'll have either a single-barreled or double-barreled 20 mm flak cannon mounted on a platform aft of the conning tower. Using your mouse and some fluid wrist action, it's possible to repel a surprise air attack, and even shoot down an occasional plane — even though your preferred choice of action would obviously be to submerge and avoid the planes altogether.



Moody, atmospheric graphics make the underwater scenes outstanding.

You also have a chance to use your 88 mm deck gun against *land* targets — something German, Italian, and British submarines did surprisingly often in the Mediterranean and Adriatic campaigns. This is, of course, a very marginal and occasional feature, but it's novel and kind of fun, and is another option that no other sub simulation offers.

Arctic Ocean missions are especially interesting when you consider that, until now, computer simulations have neglected the Murmansk convoy campaign. The Straits of Gibraltar scenario takes its inspiration directly from the movie of *Das Boot* and is very close to a suicide run. Frustrating as it might be, this scenario is worth playing, though, because it's been staged with a lot of dramatic flair. The British planes dive like hornets out of the pea-soup fog.

Predictably, the open-sea North Atlantic patrols offer the widest variety of possibilities. Included here is a chance to knock off the British carrier *Ark Royal*, which sometimes appears with a startlingly thin escort.

Communication with the Reich, with other U-boats, and with the ungainly but vital "Milch Cow" supply subs is handled in the radio room by means of the famed "Enigma" code machine. It's also possible to intercept enemy transmissions and glean vital information from them, provided you can figure out how to decode



The conning tower looks more like a visored helmet than an actual conning tower.



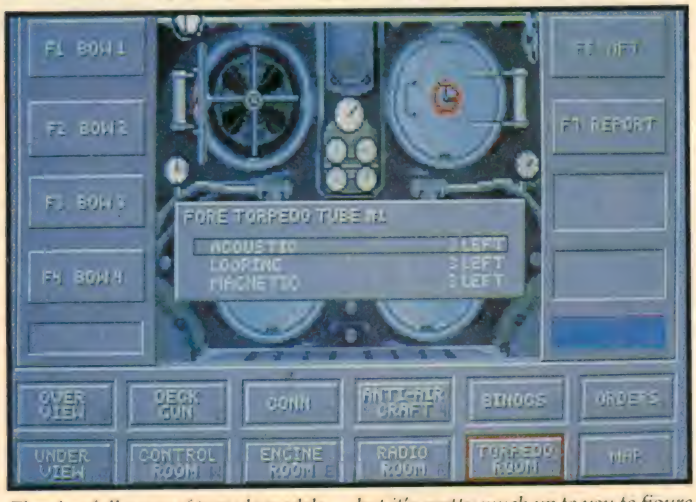
If you opt for full historical accuracy, you'll face the same odds a real U-boat skipper would have faced in about 1944.



There's lots of pretty scenery in the Norwegian fjords — but the sub looks strangely flat.



In the radio room, you'll decode messages using the famous Enigma device.



There's a full array of torpedo models — but it's pretty much up to you to figure out how to use them.

them. The instructions on how to do this are needlessly terse, and a short tutorial would be a great help.

CRASH DIVE!

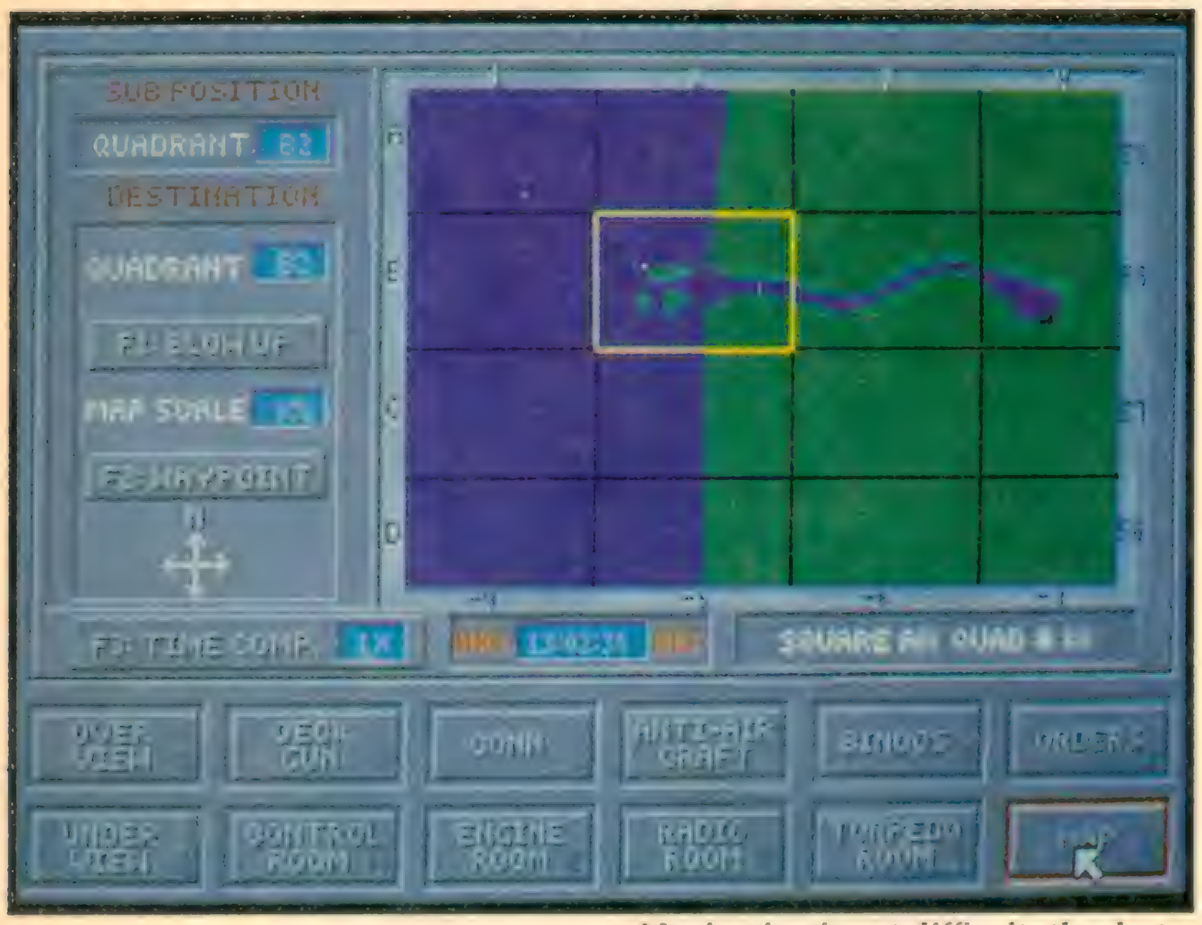
So far, so good. There's nice variety, considerable respect for historical authenticity, and some exciting flak action that no other sub simulation offers.

But there's a curiously unfinished and careless look to some of the details here that work against complete enjoyment. The graphics are occasionally stunning: The moody, murky, underwater views are good enough to be movie stills, and the achingly bright blue and iceberg white of the Arctic missions are quite striking. The animated aircraft zoom and dive with frightening realism, and the sub's interior compartments are very realistic in appearance.

Beyond these things, however, the graphics offer a host of disappointments in terms of detail. From some angles in the Overview mode, the U-boat doesn't really *look* like a U-boat — just a vague cylindrical shape that looks curiously flat and pasted on top of the ocean. It probably wouldn't have been too difficult to add a bow wake to make the sub appear to be in motion. As it is, it too often looks like the boat is standing still and the sea is moving past *it*.

Maybe we've been spoiled by the gorgeous bit-mapped vessels in *Silent Service II*, but the surface targets are definitely retrograde in appearance — the same old polygons-with-sticks-for-guns we've been seeing for years. Torpedo detonations are wimpy — there are no towering waterspouts or coils of oily flame, just little puffs of smoke that look more like mortar shells exploding.

And for some reason, no matter where your torpedo actually hits the target, the explo-



Navigation is not difficult, thanks to an easy-to-use interface and good maps:



Watch out for enemy ships hiding around the icebergs.



Nine-tenths of Hitler's submarine fleet did not survive the war; which is probably why there is no "career" mode in Das Boot.

sions always seem to start on the aft end of the ship.

Shell splashes from your deck guns (and those of the enemy) are mere plops — sometimes barely visible. Your 88 mm gun fires almost as fast as an automatic cannon, with no muzzle flash and a black dot of a shell that always comes out of the muzzle crookedly, veering to the left before returning to a plausible trajectory. How much effort and extra programming would it have taken to generate realistic waterspouts?

If you're on the surface and turn the deck gun around so that you're facing the conning tower, what you see is a peculiar sweptback structure that looks more like a visored helmet. It couldn't have required too much extra effort to have made it look like a real conning tower.

Tracers from the flak guns don't look like tracers at all — they look more like grains of pepper thrown into the sky. Again, an effort toward realism would have gone a long way.

When and how to set the range for your torpedoes is not clearly explained and should not even be necessary if you're firing torpedos that explode on contact. The uses and tactical advantages of looping and acoustic torpedoes are alluded to, but not explained with enough clarity for the player to feel confident about using them.

At this writing, there is only one other U-boat simulation on the market from a major game company: Broderbund's *Wolfpack*. Overall, *Das Boot* has a stronger feeling of authenticity in its missions, its challenges, and many of its operational systems. But in terms of graphics and cinematic realism, *Wolfpack* is far superior. If you could somehow combine the best qualities of both games, you would have a terrific simulation.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory for EGA, CGA, and Hercules graphics; 640K for VGA and MCGA graphics; Game Blaster, AdLib, and Tandy 3-Voice sound boards supported; mouse optional but strongly recommended.



Unless you relish the idea of a confrontation with this decidedly unfriendly captain of the guards, avoid hanging a left when you enter the castle.

Elvira, Mistress of the Dark

GARY MEREDITH

It's that glamour girl from ghoulsville. It's Elvira! And guess what — she can't find her chest. However, the chest in question is of the wood-and-wrought-iron variety, and is hidden somewhere inside the vast, 800-room castle bequeathed to the Mistress of the Dark by her great-great-grandmother Emelda.

It seems the old girl was none other than Lady Emelda of Killbragant, sort of a cross between Lucretia Borgia and Leona Helmsley. After dealing in dozens of dastardly deeds over the decades, Emelda died, but with the proviso that she be resurrected later to unleash her evil on a new generation of unsuspecting townsfolk. Her followers — wraiths, demonic spirits, zombies, and just plain ghosts — have been caring for the old castle and waiting for the day when Emelda would rise again, taking them all to their reward in Hades. The



Battles become easier as you gain more experience points, especially as you upgrade your weaponry.



Your first foray into the castle will probably end with your incarceration in the dungeon, where you'll be soundly chastised by the Mistress of the Dark.

chest that Elvira is so anxious to find contains the instructions for the resurrection process. If she (with your help) can get to the chest first, she can stop the resurrection, get rid of Emelda and her minions for good, and turn the castle into a resort that'll even out-trump the Donald.

Unfortunately for poor Elvira, the presence of all those demons and ghouls in the castle corridors has kept her confined mostly to the kitchen. On the other hand, since she has nothing else to do (with the exception of dispensing pithy insults), she can mix up a few spells and potions for you. Of course, you'll first have to round up all the ingredients. They're scattered throughout the castle and its grounds, and the acquisition of these ingredients is perhaps the real key to winning the game. If you have all the spells, and know how



The garden path is a veritable treasure trove of herbs and flowers necessary for the many spells you'll need.

and when to use them, your only other concern will be developing your fighting skills.

Before you can find the spell ingredients, you must be able to recognize them. Some are obvious and can be found by any half-wit (as Elvira keeps reminding you). Others, however, can be recognized only after you've cast an Herbal Honey spell. First, go to the castle library and take the spell book you find there. Then head to the kitchen, where the Mistress Elvira awaits. Leave the book with her and ask her to mix up the basic ingredients for the Herbal Honey spell. Once you've used this spell, you'll be able to recognize all the strange items required by the other spells.

Accolade's designers have made acquiring items a really simple task. All you need do is place the cursor over the object in question, then hold down the mouse button. A hand icon will appear, meaning that you can drag the object over to the inventory label. Release the



Until you've mastered the crossbow and picked up a few bolts, it's advisable to stay out of the falconry area.

button and the object appears in your inventory window. When picking up items, you must use considerable judgment in what you take and what you leave. Most of the flowers and herbs you collect won't weigh you down much, but if you acquire too many heavy items, they'll slow you down and eventually exhaust you. A good rule of thumb is to take whatever herbs and flowers you find, but just note the location of most heavier articles. They'll stay where you last left them, so there's no real reason to carry them around (that is, as long as you've saved your game regularly, and have a starting-over place should you die suddenly or need to backtrack).

AT DEATH'S DOOR

Death is indeed a very sudden event around the Castle Killbragant, as Emelda's henchmen are everywhere.



The shed at the very end of the garden path contains several important items, but don't get greedy and try to haul them all away at once.



Gardening is a more hazardous profession than you realized. Perhaps this poor fellow was experimenting with steroids and snapdragons.



Belying their appearance, maze creatures are relatively harmless if you leave them alone. They can be quite larcenous, however.

You can count on one or more of them being behind almost every door you open. That's why it pays to arm yourself to the teeth as soon as possible. There's a little gift shop just across from the corporal of the guards where you can pick up a shield and a battle-ax, but the real weapons are in the Armoury. Even after you're suitably equipped, you still must perfect your battle technique. When confronted by an enemy, you usually (though not always) get a chance to land the first blow. If you score a hit, signified by a scream and a bloody gash on your opponent, you'll often receive another offensive opportunity.



After the cook's seasoned demise, Elvira can return to the kitchen to stir up your spells. Be sure to provide her with the spell book, and don't forget to look in the pantry to your right.

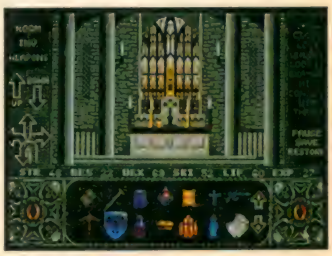


If you've collected the ingredients for the Glowing Pride spell, you can light up the passage behind the dumbwaiter, enabling Elvira to wiggle in to get the key.

With a relatively weak opponent (foes are color-coded so you can quickly judge their relative strengths), you may not have to worry about defense at all. Stronger foes require adequate defense, and here's where your reflexes really come into play. You have only a fraction of a second to determine from which side the sword (or other weapon) is coming, and to decide whether to parry or block the blow. The



You'll need the hammer from the shed and some wood from the living room to put an end to this lady's tormented existence.



The castle chapel is an inspirational haven. But enough of meditation — walk up to the altar and have a close look at the icons.

swings are random, and you'll probably find that, at first, a wrong decision on the first defensive move leads to a quick and bloody death. Fortunately, the more foes you defeat, the higher your experience points go. That makes each subsequent battle a little bit easier.

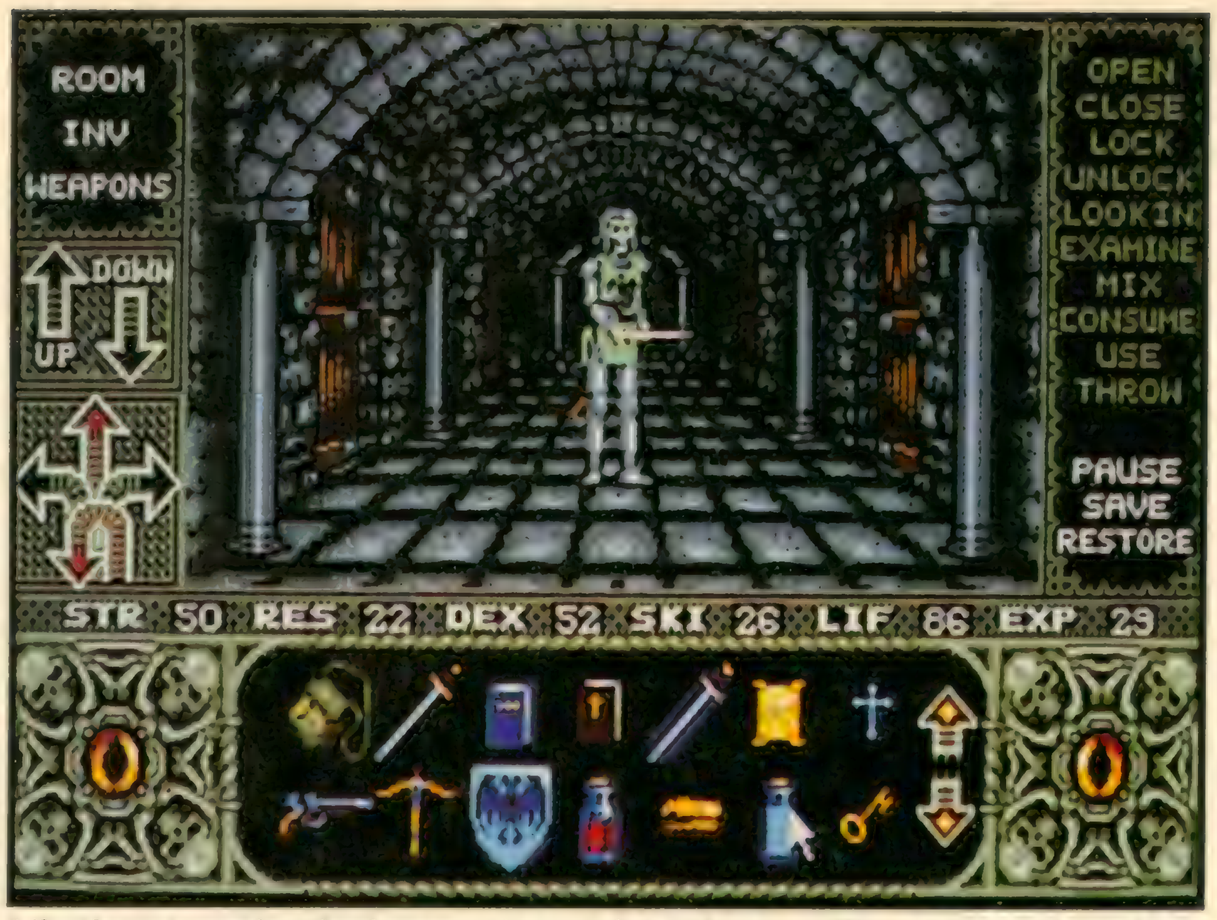
There are some castle-dwellers, such as the imposing fellows who use animate skulls as weapons, who cannot be dispatched by simple swordplay. For these you must acquire the ingredients to the more complex spells, which include potions for stunning your enemies or giving you great, albeit temporary, strength. And then there are those creatures that are best left alone entirely. While you can zap the maze creatures with a spell or with your crossbow, you're better off if you just avoid them altogether.



Everything seems to be in order, except for a small recessed area that might accept a gem of a certain shape. Like the gem in Elvira's ring, perhaps?

They might make off with some of your possessions, but don't worry. Whatever they take can be retrieved from the nest at the center of the maze.

As is usual with an FRP game or a graphic adventure, saving your game is very important. To that end, Accolade has made saving a fairly painless procedure. There is a catch, however, with restoring saved games. Unlike most graphic adventures, *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* has no directory of saved games to consult. So you must write down each saved game name or else you'll find yourself returning to DOS for a peek at the game's directory of file names. It's only a minor problem, and could probably be fixed quite easily by the game's designers.



Like the catacombs, the dungeon is one place where you'll want to get in and out as quickly as possible. The central chamber contains several important items.

GORE GALORE

Two comments must be made concerning the graphics of the game. They're excellent, full of color and detail, and really enhance the game's characterizations and believability. But they may be a bit too strong for some tastes. As the sticker on the box warns, *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* does indeed contain some bloodcurdling graphics. Severed heads floating in soup kettles, stakes driven into vampires' hearts with the expected bloody results, and sword wounds spurting gore are but a few of the chilling images you'll find in this game. These images are, of course, one of the major reasons for placing this game several steps above most of the genre's titles. There's nothing you haven't already seen in horror movies, but somehow such a confrontation on the normally sedate computer screen increases the shock value. Just keep saying over and over to yourself, "It's only 0's and 1's, it's only 0's and 1's," then sleep with the lights on for the next few weeks.



Those who live by the sword die by the sword, a motto that should be engraved on every door in Castle Killbragant.

If you can stand the gore, you'll discover that *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* possesses considerable depth and a truly wicked (and often raunchy) sense of humor. There's even a very good soundtrack, should you happen to own one of the supported sound boards. With an 800-room castle to explore, you won't be finding Elvira's chest after a few hours of gaming (the designers estimate more than 100 hours to finish, but you *can* win much more quickly). It's not a game for everyone, but its smooth game play and exciting graphics should recommend it to more than just the legions of *Movie Macabre* fans out there. As the Mistress herself would say, "Unpleasant dreams."

GP



While you can't help but marvel at the beautiful mural, you have to wonder whether there's something behind it that you need. And what about that crown on the column behind you?

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory (8-MHz 286 or faster computer recommended); hard drive required; VGA and EGA graphics; AdLib sound board supported; mouse optional.



The desperation of Waterdeep's town council has led to extraordinary actions. The very existence of the city depends on your ability to root out the evil that resides below.

Eye of the Beholder

GARY MEREDITH

With the strange occurrences that have been plaguing Waterdeep, it was no surprise that the town council posted an invitation to all the adventurers in the land. Somehow, evil has been seeping to the surface from below the city, and it must be vanquished. Considering the dire nature of the situation, it was something of a shock when they picked the lowest bidder — you — for the task of eradicating the evil.

To label you a complete novice might be putting it too harshly, so let's just say that you're yet to be seasoned by the fast and dangerous life of a hero. At least, that's all the town council needs to know. Now it seems that all you have to do is assemble a brave band to accompany you on your perilous quest. That can't be too difficult, can it?

As you'll discover, recruiting *is* pretty easy, but you'll soon realize it's probably the last easy thing you'll do in *Eye of the Beholder*. As the first true graphic role-playing adventure from **SSI**, *Eye of the Beholder* upholds the reputation of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD&D) series by being one extremely tough nut to crack. Anyone who's ever played an AD&D game can testify that these games are not for the casual player, and *Eye of the Beholder* is no exception. Level after level of seemingly endless corridors and rooms await the would-be hero.



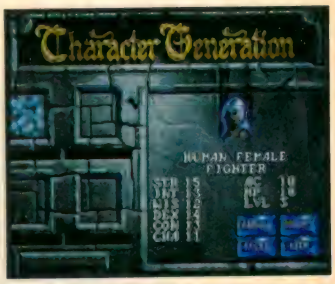
You've received your commission from the mayor of Waterdeep, but you still have the task of assembling a band of adventurers to accompany you. Choose wisely — your success depends largely on how well you battle Xanathar's minions.

And, of course, these aren't just empty rooms and corridors. The usual complement of monsters and magical forces are present, intent on making your adventure a nightmare. Throw in limited resources that must be carefully managed, and you have the makings of an adventure gamer's delight.

GOING DOWN

Below the city, residing in the far, forgotten, and disused corners of Waterdeep's sewers, an unimaginable evil has stirred. The older citizens of the city speak of a Xanathar, but no one seems to know exactly who, or what, this Xanathar is. Your commission from the council stipulates that you and your band of adventurers descend into the sewage drains to root out the evil and destroy it.

Anticipating fierce confrontations, you know you'll need some sort of warriors to lead the group of four adventurers. Besides yourself, you'll need at least one other effective fighter, or paladin. Beyond these two choices, you should definitely include a cleric and a mage to handle any events of a magical or spiritual nature.



Each character possesses nine traits, all of which but one (the level) can be modified either by random selection or by individually adding or subtracting points.

In selecting races, you can't go wrong using humans as your fighters (humans are less effective as mages or clerics). The innately non-magical dwarfs also make excellent warriors. Elves or half-elves probably make the best mages, while a gnome is a good choice for a cleric.

There's also something to be said for having a thief in the party, since you'll have to deal with locked doors and other mechanisms. The problem in taking along a thief is that he or she will be, at best, a chaotic character — you never know how a thief will react in a tight situation. Once you've chosen the race and class of a character, you're given the opportunity to review and modify his or her various traits. The game makes customizing vital statistics a simple matter, so you should be able to come up with exactly



More often than not, there's an actuator in close proximity to each door. Sometimes, however, the button or lever may be hidden in another room. You may even have to use brute force on some doors.

the group composition you want.

All the members of your party begin with an experience level of 2, and (depending on the type of character) can attain levels as high as 11 or 12. As your adventure progresses, you'll want to track your characters' development in order to assess what sort of aggression, both physical and magical, your group can withstand.

Your adventure begins on the uppermost level of the city's sewers. As your explorations take you deeper into the sewers, you'll discover that the maps which you were given become increasingly less accurate. But this isn't to say that the map for the first level is entirely dependable. From the very start there'll be uncharted corridors, hidden doorways, and undocumented additions.



The mission is only a few moments old, and things have already taken a turn for the worse. Of course, it does simplify your strategy—there's no way to go now but forward.

You'll want to keep careful notes on everything you see in case you need to double back. In the first level, however, your main concern should be just learning to stay alive. The enemies you meet there won't be all that difficult to defeat, but even they can be deadly if you drop your guard for even a moment. Combat with these enemies provides excellent battle experience that will pay off further into your adventure.

Take everything you find, including any loose rocks littering the floor. These stones make effective secondary weapons, and can also be used to hold down the floor pressure plates that actuate many of the door mechanisms. Food rations, an extremely valuable commodity, are also scattered throughout the sewers.



Camping provides the opportunity for a number of actions, not the least of which is the healing of your party after battle. Keep in mind, though, that food supplies are used up even when resting.

Careful rationing of food supplies is critical to success in the game — it's very easy to die of starvation in the lower levels if you haven't rationed properly. Remember that you continue to use up food even when you're at rest, so try not to camp for resting purposes any more than is absolutely necessary.

Knowing when and how to use the Camp option is another tricky part of *Eye of the*



Don't underestimate the diminutive Kobolds. Singly, they're not much trouble, but they can cause problems if you happen to run into a group of them. Melee weapons are your best choice against these runts.



Rocks can be used as weapons when nothing else is available, but the best reason for keeping a few on hand is to use them as weights for door actuator pads.



Some rooms and corridors will trap you by reversing your direction as you try to cross them. You'll occasionally find travel runes on the walls, which denote areas where you can, in effect, reverse the reversal.

Beholder. Not only can you rest when encamped, but you can also heal any members of your party who have been injured. If you've managed to pick up any mage or cleric scrolls since the last time time you camped, you can also use encampment to give your mages and clerics a chance to catch up on their spells.

On the other hand, camping takes up valuable time (especially if you have a lot of injuries to heal) and it doesn't offer a complete respite from battle. You can still be attacked while encamped, although you're given ample opportunity to assume a defensive posture before the enemy actually joins battle.

Take time to familiarize yourself with the spells and prayers carried by your mages and clerics. While fighting is a fairly intuitive act, limited mainly by the weapons at hand and your own experience, casting spells and invoking prayers requires considerably more thought. The midst of a battle is no place to figure out what spells you have and how to cast them, so it's a good idea to work with your non-fighters early in the game. And don't forget that clerics and mages, while designed for more spiritual tasks, can always be called on to heave a nice, solid rock or a dagger when the going gets tough.



You'll often find messages carved into the walls, but their meaning will remain a mystery unless you've included the right sort of character in your band.

CHANGING COURSES

The henchmen of the evil Xanathar have redesigned and renovated a good deal of the Waterdeep sewer system, so much so that your maps may be hopelessly outdated in certain areas. Of particular concern are the switching areas, where the direction in which you're traveling will suddenly, and without warning, reverse. That alone is reason enough to keep a constant eye on your compass. Usually — but not always — you can extricate yourself from these traps by walking forward slowly until you see the compass heading reverse. When that happens, take one step back (don't turn around, just back up) and then



The Kuo-Toa is as clumsy and slow as it looks, but it can cast deadly lightning bolts. Your best strategy is to dodge the first bolt, then rush in and attack before the Kuo-Toa can summon more lightning.

step forward again. This little trick should get you moving in the right direction once again.

Eye of the Beholder, with its dazzling animated graphics and fine soundtrack, is a quantum jump in AD&D gaming. Veterans of this genre may at first be put off by such dynamic changes, but almost certainly even the most conservative adventurers will eventually come to appreciate the added dimensions. Credit for the metamorphosis must go to Westwood Associates, whose last effort, *Circuit's Edge*, was winner of the 1990 GAME PLAYER'S Award for Best Graphic Adventure. *Circuit's Edge*, a cyberpunk sci-fi role-playing game, had atmosphere you could cut with a sword, and much of the creative presence in that game can be felt in this effort as well. *Eye of the Beholder* is another fine addition to SSI's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons lineup, and a great introduction to the series for anyone new to questing.



The cisterns in this room can be opened and closed by pressing the floor pads in the correct sequence. A fall here won't be fatal, at least not right away, but be ready to fight.



Unless you're strong and well-rested, you shouldn't do too much exploring in this museum. Taking more than three or four steps into the room makes the displays just a little too lively.



Despite their imposing size, the Flinds rely almost exclusively on the element of surprise. If you begin to take hits from behind, it's almost certainly a Flind who's attacking. Try to find an alcove and use range weapons.



Some doors can be unlocked only with a certain type of jewel. The jewel can always be found on the same level as the door it fits, so note the door's location and return when you've uncovered the right gem.



The R.A.T.S. (Rapid Access Teleport System) can zip you from one spot to another on a level, often with unexpected and unwanted results. Always be ready for a scrap when you emerge from a R.A.T.S. terminal.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Ad Lib and Sound Blaster sound boards; hard disk and mouse recommended.

GP



With his planes held as collateral by Lomax, "Lucky" Jake Masters has only two options — take a final swan dive off this pier, or take Lomax up on his offer.

Heart of China

GARY MEREDITH

Lately, things haven't gone well for "Lucky" Jake Masters. A flying ace in World War I, Jake now barely gets by on the money he earns running Airborn Imports, carrying goods from the interior of China to *his* base in Hong Kong. It's not enough to insure him an early retirement, but it was his business, mortgage and all — until tycoon E.A. Lomax needed a "favor."

When Lomax's beautiful daughter Kate, a nurse working with the poor of 1930s China, is kidnapped by the powerful warlord Li Deng, Lomax sees Jake as the perfect — and expendable — choice for a "hero." But how could he convince Jake to come to his aid? An influential man like Lomax knows that the best way to get what you want is to make someone an offer that can't be refused.



The rickshaw is the preferred mode of travel in Hong Kong during the thirties. Don't waste too much time in town — each day you use will deduct 20,000 dollars from your reward.

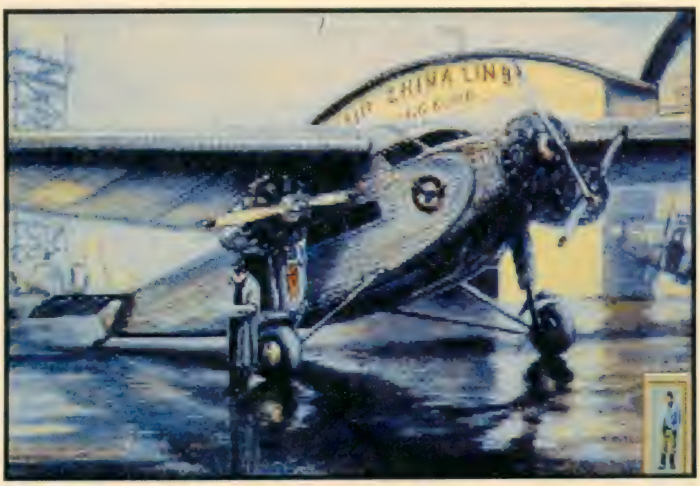
It didn't lighten Lomax's wallet too much to acquire the deed to Airborn Imports, and hold the threat of foreclosure over Jake's head as an incentive for his cooperation. But even though Lomax couldn't care less how Jake comes through the mission, he does want Kate back in one piece, so he suggests that Masters acquire the services of a mysterious ninja, Zhao Chi. With Chi, and the incentive of a $200,000 reward, Jake heads out for Li Deng's fortress in Chengdu.



Ho's bar has always been a good place to dig up some information, even though the proprietor thinks it's not a good idea to serve you any of the hard stuff. Could it be because you trashed the place the last time you overimbibed?



You don't find the illusive Zhao Chi — he finds you. And now that he's found you, how do you convince him that flying is as safe as riding a rickshaw?



The Yankee Eagle *is fueled and ready to go, but can you figure out a way to get past the immigration official? Taking the fake passport offered by Madam Wu was not one of your best moves.*

But saving Kate from Li Deng is only the beginning of Jake's troubles. Kate is slowly dying from a snakebite she received during the rescue attempt, and her sole hope of survival is an antidote which can only be found in the legendary Kathmandu, high in the mountains of Nepal. After nearly meeting with disaster during landing, Jake must help the peasants overthrow a brutal warlord before the party can fly on to Istanbul.

After all this, "Lucky" would seem to be an inapt nickname for Jake. It becomes even more ironic when, after his arrival in Istanbul, he's thrown into prison for sullying the name (among other things) of the local nabob's daughter. This time it's Kate's turn to rescue Jake, and as they ride off into the sunset aboard the Orient Express, Jake has one more task ahead of him — to finally win the heart of the lovely (and semi-grateful) Kate.

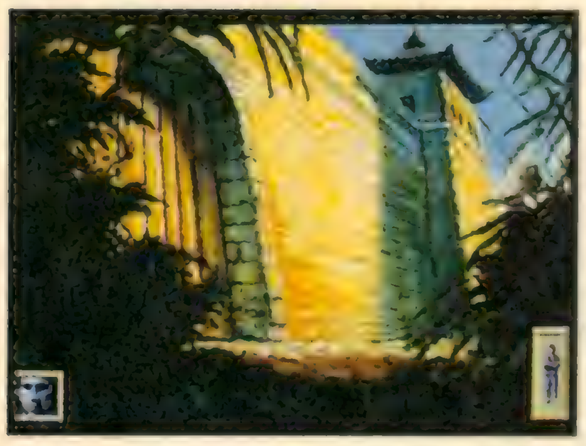
Heart of China, from **Dynamix**, is a wonderful example of how role-playing graphic adventure games are evolving. No longer are characters and storylines drawn in stark black and white. In *Heart of China*, everything is sketched in shades of gray, with intriguing subtleties of personality



While you're in transit to Chengdu, it's a good idea to save your game. Many of the landing sites you see will mean a fiery crash — and certain death for Jake and Chi.



After creating a diversion in the dining room, you can go through the kitchen to reach the room where Kate is being held. But you'll need to tranquilize the doggie first.



Finding Li Deng's fortress is easy, but getting inside is another matter. If you can find another "companion," and make a deal with one of the guards, you'll be able to walk through the front gate.

and plotting that are quite new to this kind of game.

As with all games of this type, you can either win or lose in *Heart of China*, but unlike other adventures, there are *degrees* of winning or losing. You can even lose when you win, a concept that brings *Heart of China* considerably closer to reality than many other adventure games. And in this game, as in real life, there are a number of different ways to go about solving a problem, an approach which contrasts markedly from the linear style of its predecessors.

This variety of choices makes *Heart of China* much more complex and deep than others in its genre, but it also makes it, surprisingly enough, an easier game to play. Because there is no *one* right way to do something, you have the luxury of experimenting, of finding the solution that makes the most sense to you.

When you reach Chengdu and discover Li Deng's fortress, for example, you're presented with the problem of getting inside. Ordinarily, there would only be one answer to this problem, but here you have a couple of ways in which to enter the fortress. You can either make your way through a secret passageway at the side of the fortress, or you can somehow convince the guard to let you in through the front gate. Whatever method you choose, you'll still end up in the main house.



Kate's little friends seem awfully intent on guarding her. The thought to keep in mind here is that you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.

The game's plot variations are dependent on how you interact with other characters. In



With Chi's ninja training, it's only logical that he do the reconnoitering before Jake enters the grounds. Make sure you visit the abandoned guardhouse before looking for Kate.



Indy Jones, eat your heart out! Is Jake discovering talents and courage he never knew he had, or is he just showing off for the pretty lady?



This vintage tank was a familiar sight on battlefields in the latter part of World War I. Unfortunately for Jake, the only view he ever had of its ilk was from about 3,000 feet up.



Kubla will sell you some gas for the Yankee Eagle, *but unless you can find (or make) some sort of toy to placate him, he'll insist on coming with you.*



Kate's fading fast, so there's no time to make it back to Hong Kong or Istanbul, let alone Paris. Her only hope lies in the mist-shrouded Himalayas, and the mysterious Kathmandu.

each conversation you can choose between different dialogue options, which in turn can elicit several very different responses. When you're in Ho's bar, looking for Zhao Chi, it doesn't pay to back down when confronted by one of the thugs in the bar. It turns out that this guy is one of Chi's gang, and how you stand up to him will decide whether or not you get to speak with Chi. You have to be tough with him, but not so tough that he and his buddies decide they've heard enough, and throw you out on your ear.

Conversely, you'll want to act like a pussycat when dealing with Ama in Kathmandu, or you'll never get your plane off the ground. When the time comes to renegotiate your deal with Lomax, just remember that he respects a guy who can play hardball.

Although there are a lot of differences between *Heart of China* and its forebears, a couple of basic premises remain the same. One of these is that whenever you enter a scene, you look at everything, and take anything that isn't nailed down. An object's eventual use may not be self-evident, but with the unlimited carrying capacity you enjoy, there's no reason *not* to take everything. Depending on the plot branch you follow, many of the objects you find won't be necessary. But you can't afford to take a chance by passing up something just because it seems totally useless.

Another similarity to other graphic adventures is the necessity of saving your game often. Although the primary reason for this precaution is



Jake has made better landings, but at least our party avoided learning the terminal velocity of a falling Ford Tri-Motor. Now someone will have to brave the icy wasteland and find help.



The friendly locals place Kate in Ama's care, just in the nick of time. Jake and Chi should scout around for a way out of Kathmandu while she recuperates.



Although the High Lama is friendly enough, his cryptic comments do little to ease Jake's mind. Chi, however, is more familiar with Eastern philosophies, and realizes what the Lama is trying to say.

the constant possibility of a quick and unexpected death, the multiple plot branching also makes frequent saves a must. In many interactions your first encounter sets the tone for all subsequent meetings; if you've put your foot in your mouth the first time, there's virtually no way to extract it. So save before entering into a dangerous situation, and before making any important decisions or dealing with any key characters (you'll discover that "key" describes most of the characters in this game).



Through a simple gift, Jake is able not only to free the people of Kathmandu from the oppressive reign of Bojon, but also to recruit enough villagers to turn the Yankee Eagle *around for a takeoff.*

Heart of China plays much like a movie, with many of the subtleties of the film medium. Indeed, the game was constructed as a movie, with live actors playing out scenes which were then painstakingly painted over to suggest a pulp adventure straight out of the thirties. Dynamix even had problems



Once in Istanbul, Jake manages to get himself arrested by the police for an ill-advised dalliance with the nabob's daughter a few years back. Now Kate must find a way to rescue her rescuer.

similar to those facing filmmakers, from setting up difficult action shots to having to shoot around the leading lady's pregnancy.

The game's designers have succeeded, through vivid staging, in giving a feeling of action to a game that has relatively little animation. The effort certainly shows in a game that is as great to see and hear (an excellent soundtrack rounds out the presentation) as it is to play.



A game of chance on the streets is the only way Kate can get enough money to buy the items she needs to free Jake. Watch out for Mohmar; after you've won a few times, he'll try to break your concentration in an effort to recoup his losses.



With a rather embarrassed Jake in tow, Kate heads her camel back toward the airfield. They arrive just in time to see the Yankee Eagle *— and presumably poor Chi — blown to bits.*



Heading to Paris on the Orient Express, a subdued Kate tries to discover what Jake really has in mind. Consider your answers carefully.

Hardware Requirements: 640K minimum memory (286 processor or better highly recommended); VGA graphics; major sound boards supported; mouse or joystick recommended.

GP



As the game begins, Mordack spirits away Castle Daventry — along with Queen Valanice, Prince Alexander, and Princess Rosella.

King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder

LESLIE MIZELL

Be glad you don't live in Daventry. Not only is the kingdom overrun with wizards, witches, trolls, and other undesirable characters, but the ruling family is always getting into one scrape or another. Ever since King Graham first put on that wretched Adventurer's Hat, the poor people of Daventry have had to practically rule themselves.

Perhaps some of these commoners thought that *The Perils of Rosella* would be the last royal escapade. After all, King Graham nearly lost his life in that one — indeed, had Princess Rosella not delivered some magic herbs to his bedside, the king would have died. But no sooner is the monarch back on his feet than trouble strikes yet again.

King's Quest V: Absence Makes the Heart Go Yonder begins quietly enough. King Graham is walking through the woods of Daventry, picking wildflowers to bring to his wife, Queen Valanice. But while the king is away from the castle, the evil wizard Mordack arrives. Casting a powerful spell, he makes Daventry Castle — as well as Queen Valanice, Prince Alexander, and Princess Rosella — disappear. When the king reaches the clearing where the castle once stood, all he finds is an empty crater.



It's nice of Crispin to give you his wand, but don't expect it to provide a lot of help. You won't really need it until the end of your adventure.

Fortunately the event was witnessed by Cedric the owl, who tells King Graham what has transpired. Equally fortunate is the fact that Cedric is no ordinary bird but the familiar of Crispin, an old magician. Cedric takes King Graham to Crispin's cottage, where the king receives a pep talk and a magic wand (although it's one with very little enchantment left). Thus armed, King Graham enters the woods and his newest quest begins.

A TOWN WITHOUT PITY

The beginning of *King's Quest V* is very reminiscent of the earlier adventures. As you wander around you must gather items and help other creatures, who return your favors later in the game. But remember that no one is willing to come to your rescue unless he or she has received help from you first.

Although there is no real starting point in *King's Quest V*, the best place to begin is probably in the desert. Once you've walked through the forest and have a rough idea of where things are, head to the left and leave the cool green trees behind. There aren't many objects to find amidst the sand, but you should come back with a shoe, an urn, a gold piece, and a powerful thirst.



You need to map your progress through the desert, marking the three or four oases you find. Without a drink of water every now and then, your journey is over before it has truly begun.

Pay your coin to the gypsy and have your fortune told. She'll provide some valuable plot background. At last you'll find out just why, out of all the fanciful ruling classes of the world, Mordack is picking on *your* family. Once the gypsy has revealed your destiny (and provided you with an amulet), you're ready to start your barter/rescue missions, obtaining at least one item from virtually every screen.

Only after you've found the willow's heart, saved the bees from a bear, rescued the ants from a dog, traded a needle for a cloak, and completed the

other tasks are you ready to head into the snowy mountains. The game branches into a more traditional graphics adventure at this point — you'll encounter more danger and face death more often. You have to be more inventive than earlier in the game if you're to scale mountains in one piece or survive an encounter with an abominable snowman.

If you shared your food with a starving eagle, you'll get an airlift to the next locale — a deserted beach. Search the nearby waters for an island inhabited by harpies, then return to shore and talk to a hermit. When these tasks are completed, you're finally ready to venture to Mordack's island fortress



Before you can get into the temple, you must watch how the horsemen manage their entry. Then find their camp and steal the necessary item.

Your most dangerous confrontations are yet to come, so you'll need to be resourceful and creative if you hope to survive. The most unusual items in your inventory must be applied to even more unusual situations — and you should search every cubbyhole. While there are enormous rooms that yield nothing, some vital objects are found in the most remote corners of other chambers.

As always in Sierra adventures, save your game often to avoid repeating large sections of the game because of one wrong turn. You'll finally enter a showdown against the evil wizard, and the lives of your family hang in the balance.

For the most part, *King's Quest V* is quite logical. It is seldom difficult to solve a particular problem. Your inventory contains such diverse items that you shouldn't have much trouble deciding which to use in a given situation. For example: A bear is attacking a beehive, and you have in your



Save your game before you enter the temple — and don't dally once you're inside. That door won't stay open forever.



When you return from the desert, you should have a gold coin to pay the fortuneteller. Listen carefully to what she says — at last you'll find out why Mordack has spirited away your family.



As you wander through the forest and town, take note of what situations require your intervention. These ants, for example, will help you later if you can stop the dog from digging into their elaborate anthill.

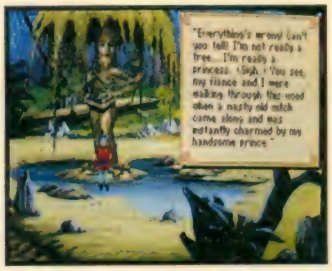


Don't forget to barter with the tradesmen in town. That sled may not be the world's finest, but it costs more than you can afford. Perhaps if you had an exceptionally well-made toy, the shopkeeper wouldn't object to an exchange.

possession a fish and a tambourine. If you can't decide which item you should use, perhaps you're playing the wrong game.

But there is one especially exasperating situation. It's impossible to leave the witch's woods without a little information from the little people. These greedy elves want the emeralds you picked up in the witch's house — but given the chance, they'll snatch them and run.

You're supposed to guess that a little honey on the elves' shoes will cool their heels long enough for you to find a way to escape. OK, it's not *that* farfetched, but it's not one of the first things that comes to mind, either.



There aren't many people evil enough to steal a princess's heart. This is probably the work of an especially wicked witch. Maybe now's the time to venture into the dark woods north of the forest.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

In many ways, *King's Quest V*



Give the witch a taste of her own medicine, and you'll be able to search her home unhindered. Getting out of these woods won't be as easy, however. When you've collected all the items you need, go to the left and try to trap an elf.

is unlike any other *King's Quest* adventure. For example, it's the first Sierra graphic adventure to feature true VGA graphics — and what graphics! The subtle shades and depth of field are unlike any other game, from Sierra or anyone else.

Unfortunately, for a game that takes up nine 3 1/2" high-density disks, there's little animation in the backgrounds. There may be fog in the trees, but it doesn't drift. And if there's a waterfall in the mountains, the water doesn't cascade.

But the game is as *slow* as one that has much more going on. Unless your computer is of the 386 variety, you'll spend a lot more time looking at the graphics than you might like. A *lot* more time.

There are also — surely to the consternation of those people who hate traditional role-playing games — three sections of the game that need to be mapped. The first two, the desert and sea scenes, are of standard grid designs that are easily graphed. Scorpions, sea serpents, or thirst will end your journey if you venture too far from the correct path.

The third sequence, the dungeon in Mordack's fortress, is so confusing that you're almost better off wandering around than trying to make sense of it. (You can exit this scene as soon as you've found a hairpin and a door with a lock to pick).

The good thing about



Once you've helped everyone out of their predicaments in the lowlands, head into the snow-covered mountains. You won't have trouble finding Icebella — her wolves track down you and Cedric.



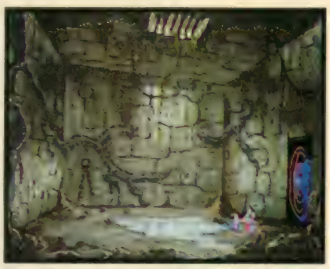
Property values really go down when a yeti moves in nearby. They're big, mean, smelly — and awkward. Check your inventory for a slapstick prop that might catch this yeti off balance.

King's Quest V is that it has a new interface system. No longer do you have to struggle to find the correct phraseology to control King Graham. You don't have to decide if those are buttons, knobs, dials, or handles before you can open something.

The familiar text box has been replaced with a single icon that rotates among the com-



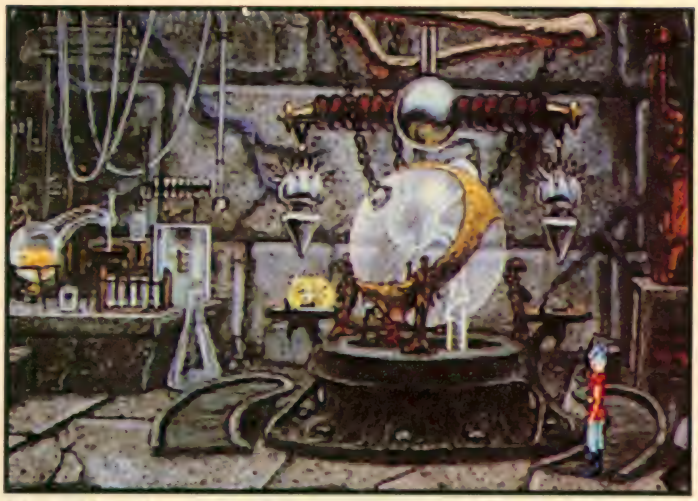
After a long battle at sea, you finally reach Mordack's fortress. Proceed with caution, and blast the evil eyes of these stony serpents with a beam of your own.



Don't worry if you land in the dungeon — there's a vital item for you to find down there. However, you only want to get imprisoned once. A second trip to the cell will be your last.

mands Walk, Look, Talk, and Manipulate. When you choose an item from your inventory, it becomes the fifth command and you can use the object or give it to someone, whichever is appropriate. This system makes a mouse even more of a requirement than is usual with Sierra games.

The *bad* thing about *King's Quest V* is that it has a new interface system. One of the best things about the Sierra graphic adventures is their sense of fun. Anyone who has played the games — and not just the *Leisure Suit Larry* series, either — knows that there is usually a large vocabulary of...uh...verbs...not really needed to finish the games.



Wait in Mordack's study until the wizard takes a nap. Then grab his wand and head for the machine in his laboratory for a little magic switcheroo.



When Mordack interrupts you in the laboratory, you know it's time for a final showdown. Save the game before he arrives, then try different spells until you find the correct pattern.

Instead, it's fun to suggest improper actions or comments just to see what comeback the clever designers have devised.

But in *King's Quest V* you don't type in any commands, so you can't tell King Graham to whomp Cedric on the head (even though you'll want to) or grab the kitchen wench for a quick buss (though *he* probably wants to). So instead of *guiding* King Graham through the adventure, you feel more like he's leading you. You'll end up watching much of the game as the action automatically unfolds without any commands from you. It makes for an easier game, but not necessarily a more enjoyable one.

King's Quest V will probably hold greater appeal for those new to the series than for those who have played the previous four adventures. That doesn't by any means make *King's Quest V* a bad game — on the contrary, the sound, graphics, and storyline are great — but fans of the series may be disappointed in a game that they *watch* as much as they *play*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; versions available for VGA/MCGA graphics, for EGA/MCGA graphics, and for EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; hard drive recommended; joystick optional; mouse recommended; supports sound boards.



Regardless of your profession, you need to stop by the apothecary, where Harik will concoct some valuable potions for you.

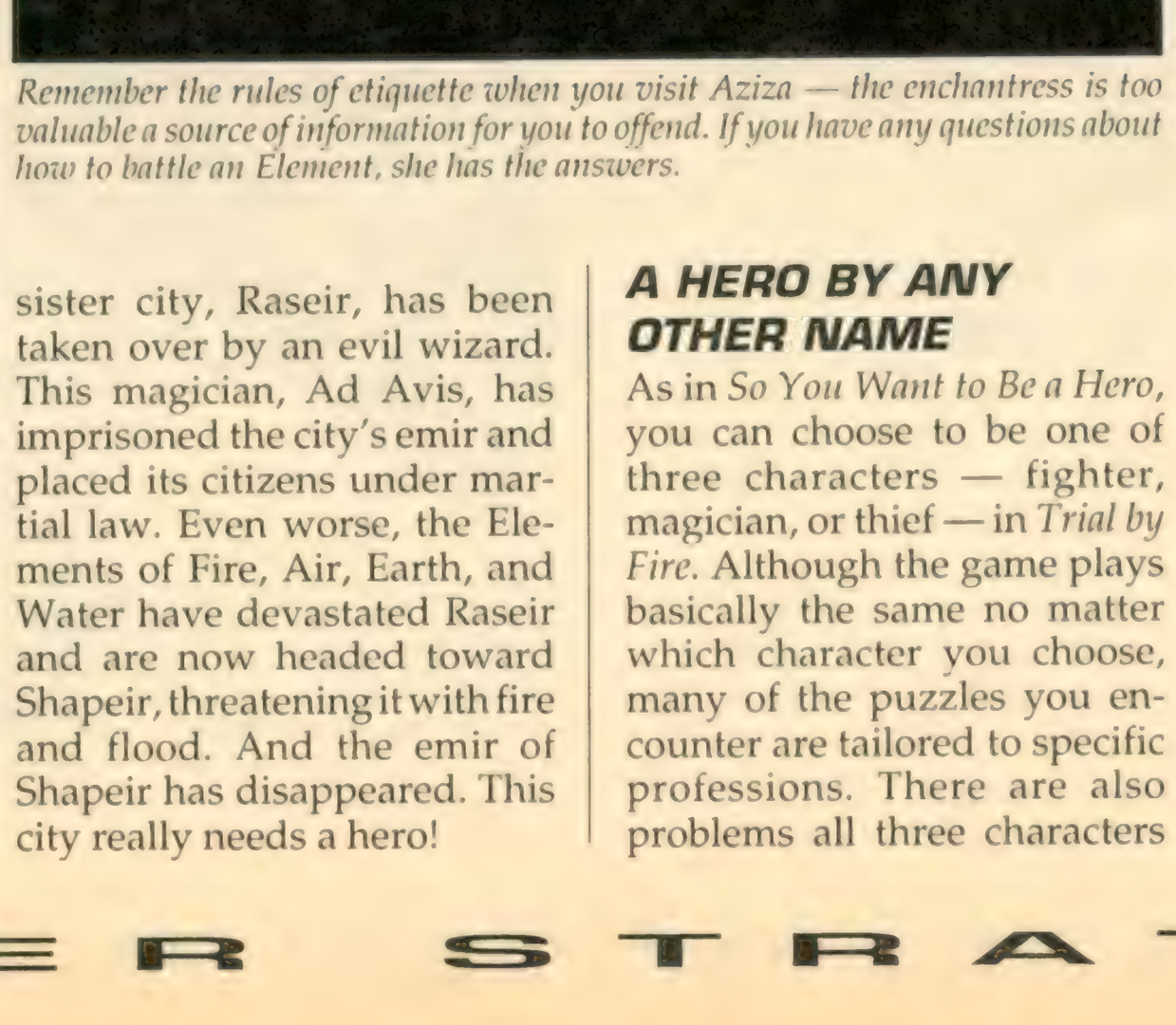
Quest for Glory II: Trial by Fire

LESLIE MIZELL

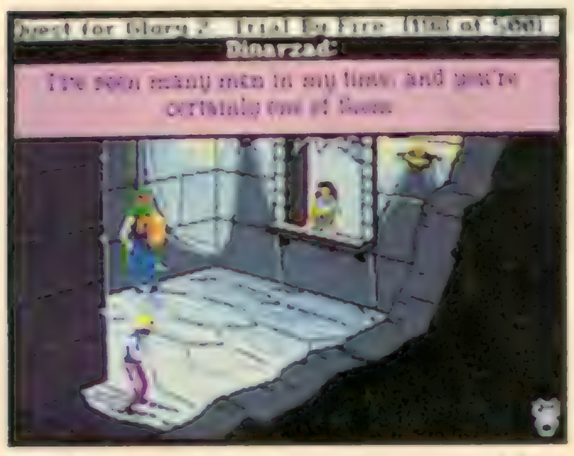
If you've ever wanted to be a real hero without risking your life, you need to check out **Sierra's** Quest for Glory game series. It's designed for would-be heroes, and it provides hours and hours of challenge and fun.

In the first Quest for Glory game (the series was originally titled Hero's Quest), *So You Want to Be a Hero*, you earned the title of hero by saving the medieval town of Spielburg from the grip of the evil witch Baba Yaga. *Trial by Fire*, released several months ago, is the second adventure. Here, designers Lori and Corey Cole spirit you away to Shapeir, a village right out of *The Arabian Nights*.

Without your help, Shapeir has considerably less than 1001 nights left to exist. Its sister city, Raseir, has been taken over by an evil wizard. This magician, Ad Avis, has imprisoned the city's emir and placed its citizens under martial law. Even worse, the Elements of Fire, Air, Earth, and Water have devastated Raseir and are now headed toward Shapeir, threatening it with fire and flood. And the emir of Shapeir has disappeared. This city really needs a hero!



Remember the rules of etiquette when you visit Aziza — the enchantress is too valuable a source of information for you to offend. If you have any questions about how to battle an Element, she has the answers.



It's best to exchange all your gold at once so Dinarzad won't keep taking out commissions. She's an important contact — especially if you've chosen to play as the thief.

A HERO BY ANY OTHER NAME

As in *So You Want to Be a Hero*, you can choose to be one of three characters — fighter, magician, or thief — in *Trial by Fire*. Although the game plays basically the same no matter which character you choose, many of the puzzles you encounter are tailored to specific professions. There are also problems all three characters will face in which various solutions will work, depending on your hero's specialties. For example, if a hero were trying to obtain an object that's not for sale, the fighter could battle for the object, whereas the magician could use a spell to procure it or the thief could steal it.



Every action you're required to do in Trial by Fire *has a reason. If you're challenged to walk a tightrope, practice until you're an expert.*

Once you've chosen the profession of your hero, you can examine his statistics and then distribute an extra 50 points to the categories in which you wish to strengthen his skills. It would be wasteful, for instance, to allot points to lock-picking if your character is a fighter, or to bolster the magic skills of a thief. Sierra suggests these point allotments: For the fighter, divide your points among strength, vitality, and fighting skills; for the magician, split points among intelligence, agility, and magic; and for the thief, add ten points each to agility, vitality, luck, stealth, and lock-picking.

If you've played *So You Want to Be a Hero*, it's possible

to import your character into *Trial by Fire*. There are both advantages and disadvantages to doing so, and whether you should start with a seasoned hero depends largely on how you fared in the first game. (Imported characters don't receive 50 extra points.)

When we imported our thief hero into *Trial by Fire*, he ended up with greater strength, intelligence, agility, vitality, weapon usage, and climbing skills than a new character would have, but with fewer points in luck, dodging ability, stealth, lock-picking and throwing skills. Our imported character also had considerably more points in both health and stamina. All things considered, our original character was a significant improvement over a newly created one.



The first Element you encounter is Fire. Lure it into the alley with incense (you should have only one bag), place the container which will hold the Element on the ground, then use water to weaken it.

No matter what career your character follows, it's important for him to practice his arts. A fighter should accept any opportunity to fight; a magician should learn every spell possible; and not only should a thief sneak instead of walk to increase his stealth, but should also pick the lock on any door. Make the right moves with your hero and by game's end, he should have the maximum number of points (200) in most of the skills of his trade.

THE ELEMENTS OF HEROISM

The city of Shapeir is composed of many twisting alleys and streets connected by four plazas. Your first move would logically be to buy a map — but for some reason you forgot to exchange your gold for dinars back in Spielburg. So you have to hunt for Ali the money changer before you can truly get started. Don't panic as you try to maneuver through the mazelike street system. Once you find Ali and buy his magic map, you can almost always point-and-click to arrive at your destination.

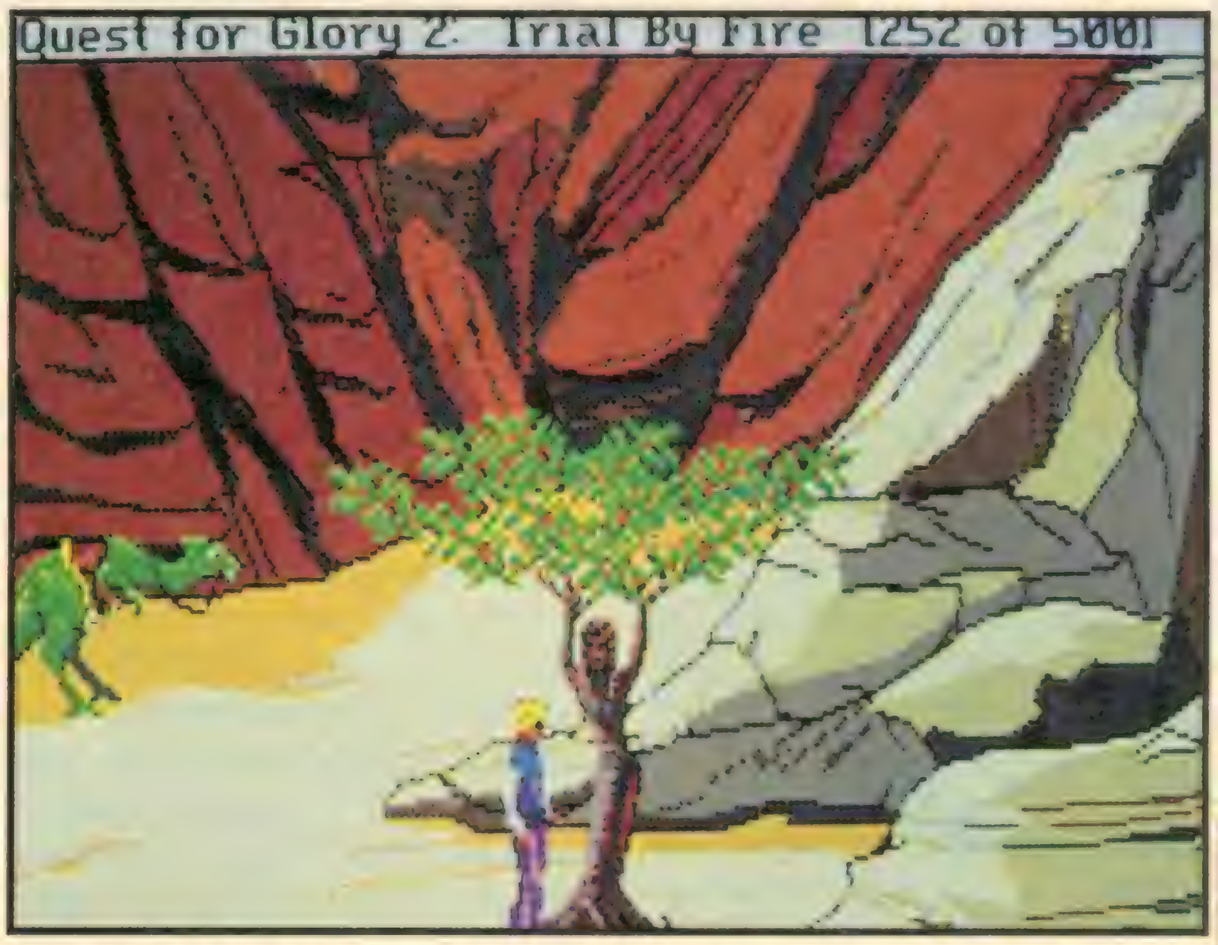
Exchange *all* of your gold for dinars — you don't want to have to keep returning and paying commissions to Dinarzad the money changer. Once you have a map in hand, explore the plazas and buy any wares the merchants have for sale. You should also start



Your saurus is better than a map — and more affectionate. There's no need to retrace your steps in the desert; Shapeir is only one screen away anytime you tell your saurus to "go home."



It's important to talk to Julanar the tree-woman after each of the three acts (Compassion, Sacrifice, and Love) you must perform. She won't bear fruit until you've completed the Act of Love and asked her name.



During the day, the desert is the haven of brigands, terror sauruses, and scorpions. At night, you'll encounter scorpions and ghouls, as well as packs of jackalmen you must battle.



Your saurus is more loyal than a puppy, and not much more intelligent. Could he have something to hide? Aziza the Enchantress will reveal his true persona.

buying potions, pills, weapons, and magic items from the stores in the plazas—but keep an eye on your funds. Although there are ways to get more money, the opportunities won't come along until later in the game.

Time in this game is divided into days, and as a result, events happen at a leisurely pace, to say the least. For example, you won't be able to go to Raseir until day 17. If you're familiar with the style of play in Sierra games, you'll probably want to adjust the time scale to its fastest speed. Otherwise, those mid-afternoon hours can really drag.

Although defeating the four Elements (Fire, Air, Earth, and Water) is your primary goal in Shapeir, there are other quests. You need to spend some time in the desert fighting brigands, jackalmen, and scorpions. You also need to restore the soul of Julanar the tree-woman, and obtain the ingredients for the dispel potion. And you'll have to stop by and see what you can learn from the enchantress and the astrologer.

But before you can get to



Once you reach Raseir, stop by the Blue Parrot Inn. Signor Ferrari, the proprietor, has some valuable advice. He's also a valuable contact for thieves.



In a scene right out of a Humphrey Bogart movie, you must steal "the stuff that dreams are made of" from a house in Raseir.

Raseir, you must defate the Elements. Aziza the Enchantress will give you the information you need to fight them, but make sure you have the lures and containers necessary to fight each of the Elements when the flames start licking through Shapeir or when the plazas start shaking from earthquakes.

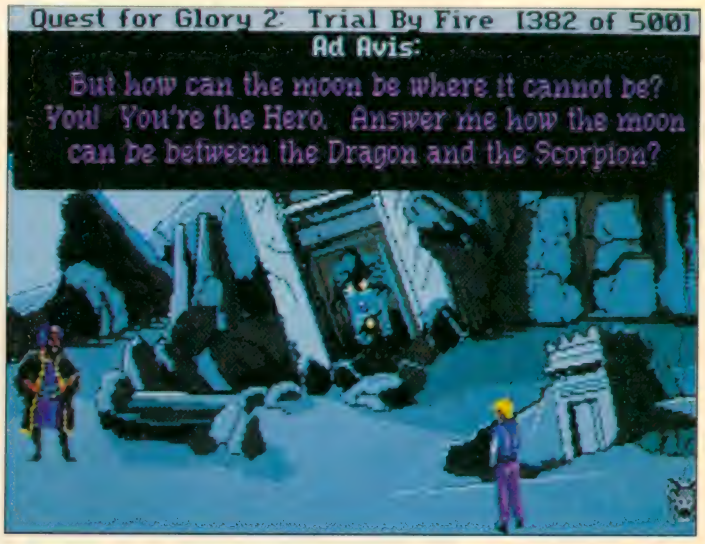
The first Element you encounter, Fire, must be lured into an alleyway with incense. When your incense bag is empty, put down the lamp (the container for Fire), use water to weaken the Element, then put the flame in the lamp. The Air Element is the most difficult to defeat—especially if you've selected a difficult arcade level. Throw dirt into the center of the Element's tornado until it is unable to move, then quickly capture it in the proper container.

The other two Elements are no problem to defeat. The Earth Element turns to dust when you throw just one burning powder between its eyes, and you can use the Air Element to blow the Water Element off course, then capture it in the appropriate container.

HERO AT LARGE

After you've captured the four Elements, restored the tree-woman's soul, and located the emir, you're ready to travel to Raseir. The grateful citizens of Shapeir give you all the provisions you need, so don't worry if you forgot to fill your waterskin.

Once you've checked into the Blue Parrot Inn, talk to the proprietor to get the scoop on the town. Unfortunately, your map doesn't help much in



Ad Avis hypnotizes you and makes you follow him to the Forbidden City, but even his wizardry can't open the doors of the tomb. You hold the item that will place the moon between the dragon and the scorpion.



If you can't stop Ad Avis from completing the ritual, you can say good-bye to Raseir — and the rest of the world as well.

Raseir, but at least most of the streets here are boarded up. If you manage to get lost, however, you're in pretty deep trouble, because Raseir's streets have no signs. You should also remember that there's a strictly enforced curfew in the town, so you need to be indoors by sunset — unless, of course, you're a thief.

But no matter how careful you are, you're going to wind up in jail. And no sooner do you escape than you find yourself in the clutches of Ad Avis, hypnotized by his magical gaze. Zip! Under his evil spell, you're off to the Forbidden City to help fulfill the prophecy you've heard so much about ever since you arrived in Shapeir. Once again you must brave Fire, Air, Earth, and Water until you reach the tomb of the demon Iblis, a terrible being imprisoned in a shard of crystal.



Although you can't stop Ad Avis from stealing Iblis, you can return the demon to his tomb. You just need the help of the one thing that's missing from this Arabian Nights *tale — a genie.*

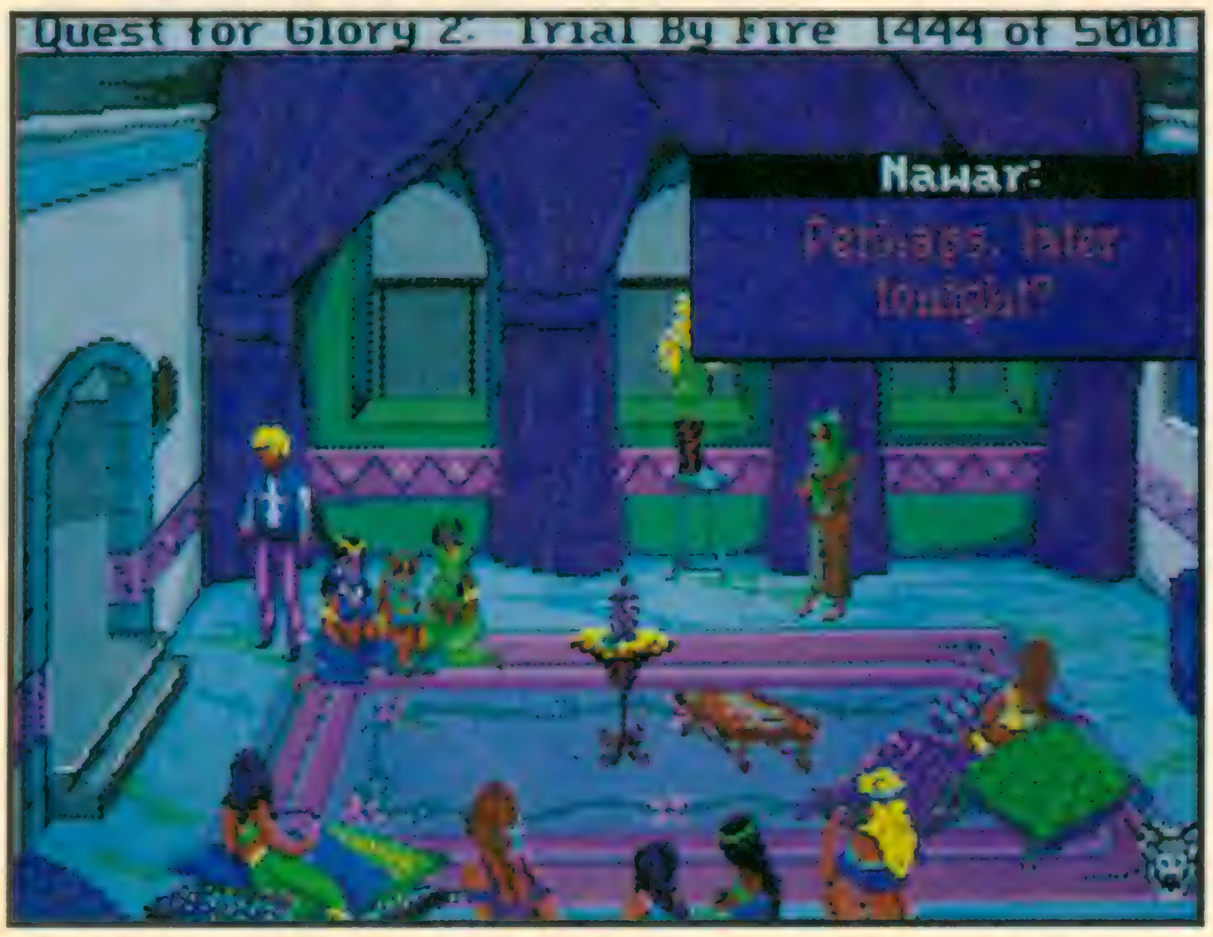
No sooner has Ad Avis grabbed the crystal for his own evil plans than you're released from your spell and realize that you've been duped. There's still time to regain your hero status — but only if you hurry. Iblis must be returned to the Forbidden City before he destroys the world.

Trial by Fire is truly a superior graphic adventure. While many role-playing games throw logic to the wind or force you into meaningless tasks, *Trial by Fire* is extremely cohesive. The repeated use of the Elements unifies the intricate plot. And if you wonder why you should be walking a tightrope early in the game, rest assured that it's a skill you'll need later on.

Although it doesn't contain some of the naughty verbs and nouns that many of us try to use in Sierra games, *Trial by Fire* has its own sense of humor. Bogart fans in particular will enjoy Raseir, where allusions to *Casablanca* and *The Maltese Falcon* run rampant. This game also has Sierra's most endearing character — Roget the Saurus. This bewitched and bewitching bipedal reptile has the personality of a beagle and much more charm than the human he eventually turns out to be. Is it too much to hope that he'll someday get his own game? Maybe the Coles can slip him into *Quest for Glory III: Shadows of Darkness*, their next heroic adventure.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, and Hercules graphics; hard disk recommended; 8mhz or faster machine recommended; mouse recommended; joystick optional; supports sound boards.



Some heroes might consider this the end of their quest: a harem full of willing young lovelies. Maybe when you've returned Iblis to the Forbidden City....



Oops! Try again — and this time remember that one false move releases the demon.



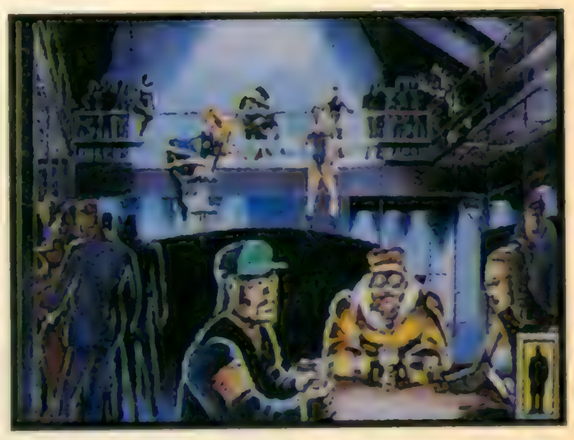
Home not-so-Sweet Home — with what a private investigator makes these days, you're lucky to be able to afford this dump. No wonder you spend so much time at Karyn's place.

Rise of the Dragon

GARY MEREDITH



Before you do anything else, you'd better get over to city hall and apologize to Karyn for forgetting about your date. Some nice flowers might grease the wheels a bit.



The Pleasure Dome is no place for the timid. Even the hat-check girl is packing heat. Keep looking until you find "the Jake."

Who needs an alarm clock when the mayor takes it upon himself to wake you personally? That was the only thought that managed to squeeze its way out through your gin-soaked brain cells on the morning Mayor Vincenzi and a couple of his goons paid you a visit. Unfortunately, it wasn't exactly a social call. His daughter, Chandra, had just died under very strange circumstances, and he needed an investigator with underworld connections. Quite naturally, he thought of you, William "Blade" Hunter, a discredited ex-cop turned sleazy P.I. Considering your past employment record with the city, and the fact that you hadn't had a job in weeks, it wasn't too difficult for him to convince you that taking on the investigation was your only option.

Your underworld connections, plus a taste for anything that has an even chance of pickling what's left of your brain, lead you to a local strip joint and bar named the Pleasure Dome. There you meet up with "the Jake," a small-time operator who you eventually learn was a friend of the mayor's daughter. From him you're able to pick up enough leads to get yourself into big trouble. It seems that the girl was involved with a drug dealer, Chen Lu, who has strong ties to a secretive Oriental crime group. But before you can question Chen Lu, he dies in the same horrible fashion as Chandra. Searching his apartment, you're able to uncover a cryptic message and a suspicious-looking drug patch. You also gain access to his computer, discovering that Chen Lu was only a small fish. His boss? None other than Deng Hwang, the number one crime lord in the city.

You enlist the help of your girlfriend, Karyn, who's obviously a saint since she has to put up with all your antics. Karyn works for the City Hall records department, and thanks to her connections there, you're able to have the patch analyzed. It contains a drug, MTZ, which attacks and transmutes the DNA structure of the user. It's a horribly painful way to die, but it could be the fate of the city's entire population. From the cryptic and ancient Chang Li, you learn of the impending resurrection of the infamously legendary Bahumat. In preparation for this event, his followers are planning to dump MTZ into the city reservoir. What started out as a simple murder case has suddenly escalated into a mission to save millions.

GRAVE NEW WORLD

Rise of the Dragon sets you down in a future society of intrigue and decadence. **Dynamix** has done a marvelous job of creating a world that slips past possible and perilously near probable. With a bow to the movie *Bladerunner*, Hunter's city is cast in shadows and mist. Every corner appears to hide some dark secret, as do most of the people you'll meet. With few exceptions, the denizens of the city are ciphers, near-ghosts inhabiting a near-dead city. You almost find yourself wondering why you should even bother to save the place. But then there's Karyn, who's probably a lot more than you deserve, and the matter of the prophecy.

During a foray into one of the darker corners of the city, you come upon the mysterious Chang Li, who has been

expecting you. He seems to think that you're the prophesied saviour who would come to save the world from a reborn Bahumat. To this end, he gives you what help he can. With the mayor pressuring you from one side and Bahumat's minions dogging you from the other, you'll need all the help you can get. That even extends to springing for some roses to smooth over the hurt feelings of a girlfriend you've stood up.

The open-ended design of the game allows you to proceed in different ways, yet still end up at the same place. It allows for any sidetracking you wish to pursue. You'll discover that parts of the game exist just for sheer entertainment, with no bearing on the outcome. Your romantic interlude with Karyn is but one example. There are even alternate endings to the game so that you can win without saving the girl.

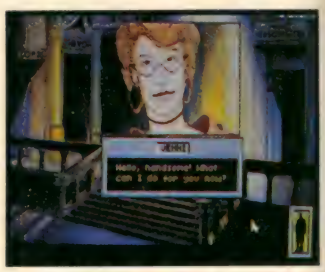


Most of your tips will come from "the Jake," so get on his good side early. Don't be afraid to show a tough attitude, though — being too nice will lose you his respect.

You make your way through "Blade" Hunter's world by simply pointing and clicking. Nearly everything, including game options and files to restore, can be accessed with the cursor, using either a mouse, joystick, or keyboard. If you want to pick up something, open a cabinet, or just get a description of an item, you need only click on it. The keyboard is necessary for typing in saved game names, and is recommended for use during the arcade sequences. You may use a mouse or joystick with the latter, but they're rather awkward to use because they lack the precision needed to make some of the more delicate maneuvers. One slight problem with the point-and-click interface: When dialogue boxes appear on the screen, the cursor jumps to



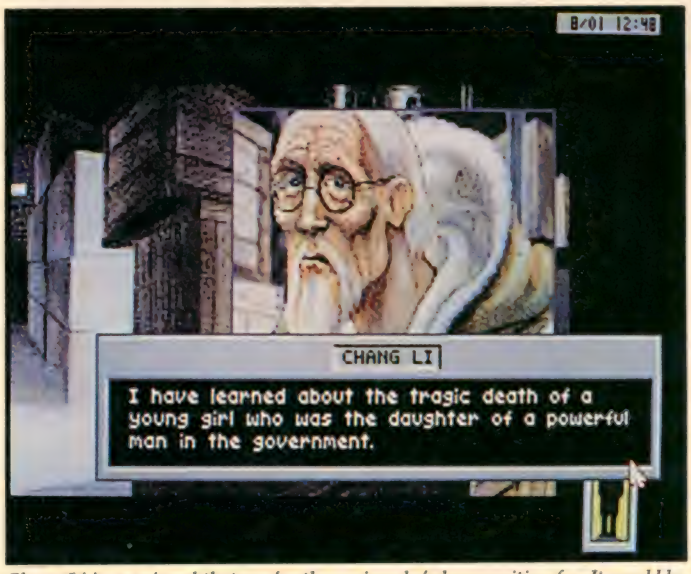
Once you've got a lead on Chen Lu, you'll need to visit his place. Although you're too late to talk with him, you can find some important items here.



Don't fall for Jenny's come-on and don't hesitate to be forceful with her — you really need to see the Mayor.



Mayor Vincenzi has little or no respect for you as a human being, but he is aware that you're his only hope for finding his daughter's murderer.



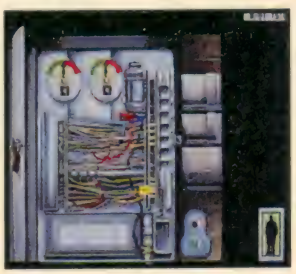
Chang Li is convinced that you're the saviour he's been waiting for. It would be a shame to disappoint him after all the nice things he's given you.

each one. This means that you must continually drag the cursor around much more than should be necessary. A small point, but one that can be a bit irritating at times.

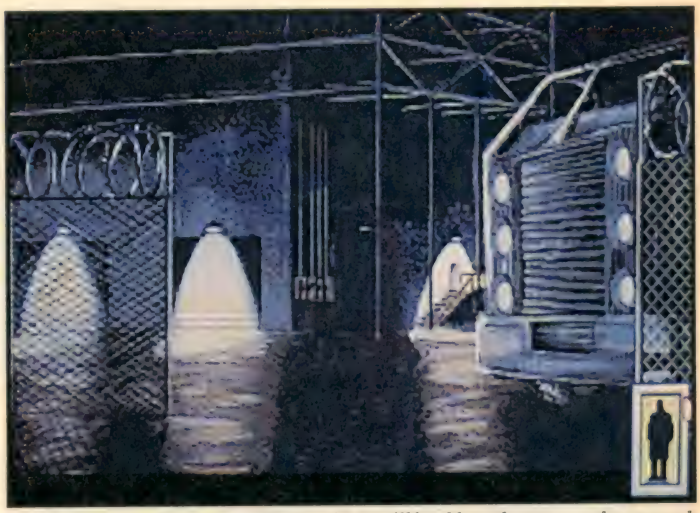
Predictably, there are a number of rather painful ways to die in *Rise of the Dragon*. You may, for example, take exception to the guards outside the Pleasure Dome relieving you of your weapon. Pressing your point could get you pummeled to death by a remorseless android. You really must save your game as often as possible, and *always* before venturing into unknown territory. Because you're under a time limit, saving is also a good way of exploring several different tacks while conserving the precious hours you've been allotted. The save procedure is fairly simple, and you can save as many games as you need just by moving to another directory when you've filled up the default directory. Just to make sure you don't do anything really careless, the designers have included a save prompt just prior to entering the arcade sequences.



Gunplay is a big part of Hunter's life. The mouse activates the directional pad at the bottom of the screen, but the keyboard offers greater control.



Wiretapping is illegal, even with the lower moral standards of the 21st century. This is the only way, however, to find out about Deng's plans for MTZ dispersal.



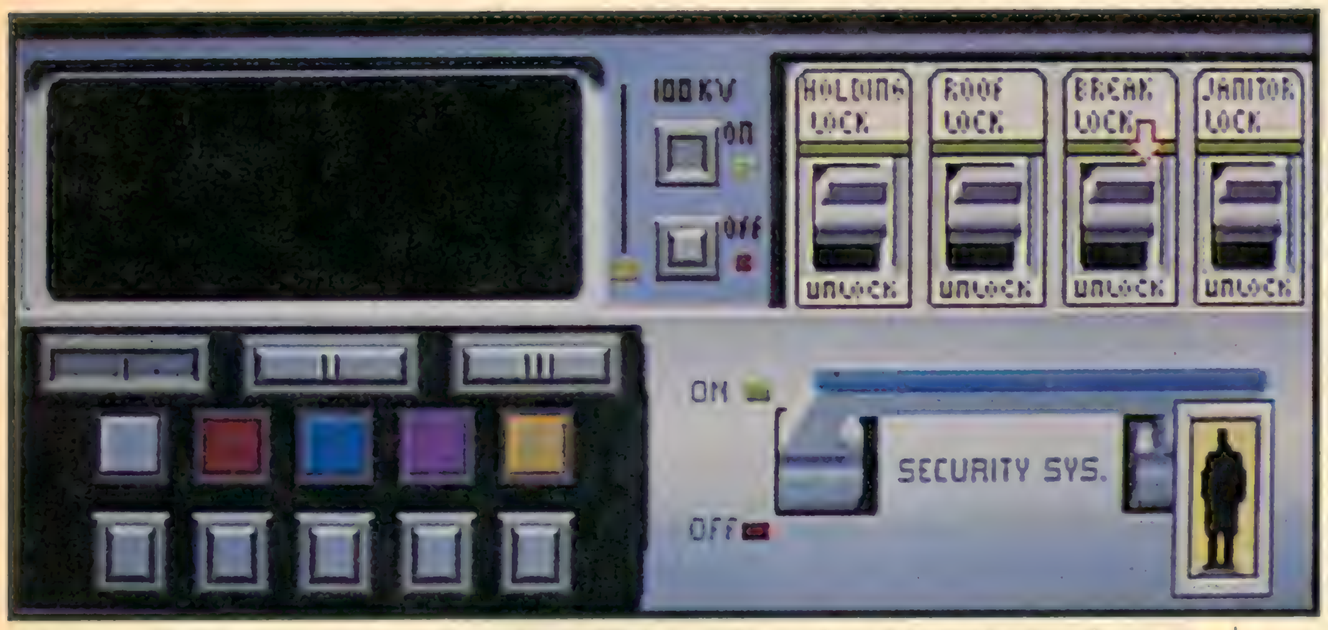
If you've managed to pick up a few bombs, you'll be able to throw a monkey wrench into Deng's plans and buy some time for yourself.



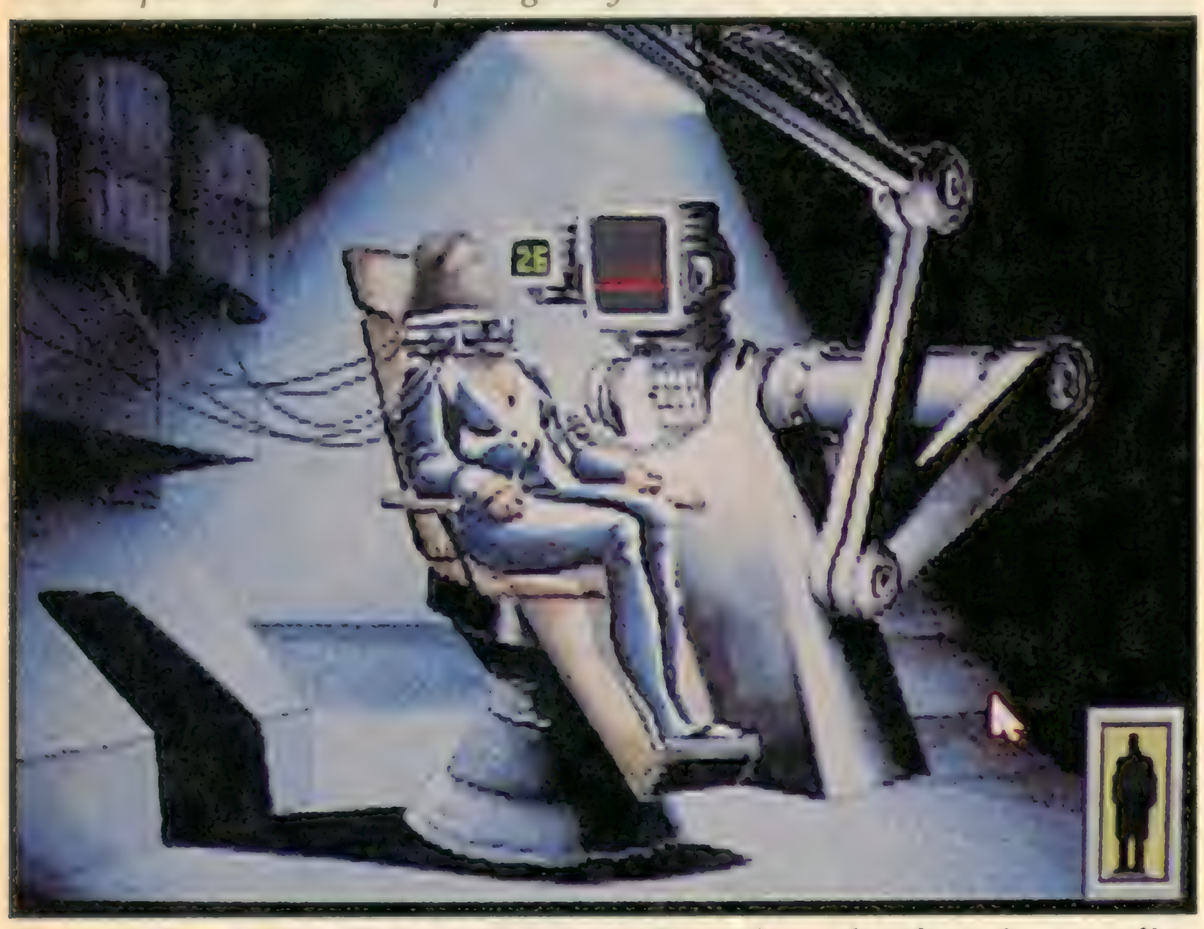
Getting past the receptionist at Deng Hwang Enterprises takes considerable guile. Play the part of the repairman, but don't let her try to verify your story.

Since your capacity for carrying items is unlimited, it makes sense to take anything you find. Some items are red herrings, but most will find some use during your adventure. Taking an item is extremely simple. All you do is click on the item and drag it over to the little character icon in the lower right corner. Using an item involves only a little more effort, requiring you to first access your inventory window.

Most items can be carried around throughout the game, but you may find it more convenient to leave your gun at home some of the time. You have only so much chocolate with which to bribe the guards at the Pleasure Dome, and without that bribe it's virtually impossible to reclaim your weapon when you leave. So if that's your destination, it's best to leave your gun at the apartment. You can always go get it when you think you'll really need it. The inventory window, incidentally, can also be used to advance time in



After entering the security room, find the control panel and lock the break-room door before you do anything else. Since you don't have the proper ID card, punch in the sequence that the computer gives you.



The readout on the computer screen means Karyn has only a few minutes to live — unless you can find some way of disabling the injection-collar system.

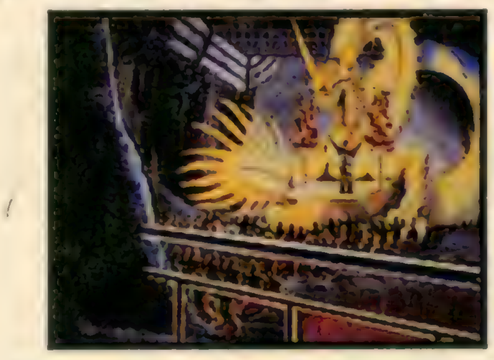
minute or hour increments — which means that you don't have to wait around all day for a crucial meeting with "the Jake," or for the time when you can finally get some sleep.

NEW-LOOK GRAPHICS

Graphically, *Rise of the Dragon* is stunning, looking like no other game. In something of a daring move against the growing practice of digitizing real actors and locales, Dynamix has chosen to hand-draw its game scenes, using muted tones to underscore the vague, edgeless nature of the city. The idea is to give a comic-book flavor to the screens. The designers succeeded admirably, achieving a look that's not only unique but which also leaves the game player with the gritty feel of this city-to-be. Also, by softening the background focus, the artists have imbued the scenes with three-dimensional depth.

A comic book bundled with the documentation provides a prelude to game play, as well as some valuable hints concerning the varied responsibilities of the typical sleazy private dick. You're free to take all of this information with as many grains of salt as you like. That applies particularly to any advice you're given concerning the use of your circuit tester. As you'll learn from the first few jolts of current, the proper wiring sequence may be more the result of luck than of any tips you may glean from the handbook.

If we can take the game's ending at face value,



It appears that things are coming to a head. Judging from the frenzied followers below, the prophecy of the Dragon's resurrection may have been all too accurate.



With Bahumat dead and his heinous plot put to rest, the only thing left is the requisite walk into the sunset, but Hunter wants to chat with the Mayor and apply the final punctuation to this story.

Rise of the Dragon is but the first installment in the continuing saga of "Blade" Hunter. Dynamix, now a subsidiary of Sierra, has done a marvelous job, and I can only expect subsequent entries in the series to get better as the characters are developed and the plots grow in complexity. Still, *Rise of the Dragon* will be a tough act to follow.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory (10-MHz 286 or faster recommended); VGA graphics; hard disk and mouse recommended; joystick optional; major sound boards supported.



In the main menu, you can choose the scenario for your planet-building efforts. The various difficulty levels set limits on your time and resources.

SimEarth

GARY MEREDITH

As you look out across the valley, you squint to see any details through the haze and the glare. It's only been a few hours since sunrise, and yet the heat is almost too much to endure. The large amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere makes breathing difficult; the oppressive temperatures only compound the problems of respiration. You might wish for rain to cool the parched landscape, but the acidic droplets that pass for precipitation only burn the skin and eat away at the flora. Not that a dry day is any picnic. With such a sparse ozone layer, the sunlight that gets through the haze is just as destructive as the rain.

Future conditions on Earth? Maybe, but this scenario also describes how our world probably looked a few billion years ago. In *SimEarth*, you have the opportunity to be there at the beginning, to see the Earth as an infant in the cosmos. And you have the ability to experiment with all facets of planetary science, perhaps even coming up with a new, improved Earth. All things are possible in *SimEarth*, a product which transcends the term "computer game." An impressively deep and thoughtful simulation, *SimEarth*'s only boundary is the limit of your imagination.



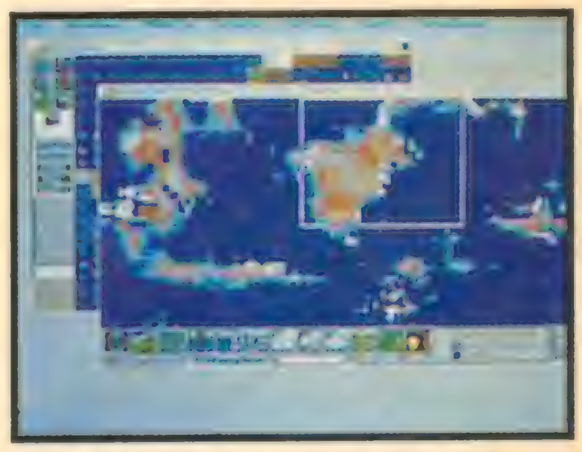
When you select a world at random, you must name it before deciding on a time scale in which to work. Choosing the geologic scale will let you start at the very beginning of a planet's existence.

This is not exactly a sequel to **Maxis**' immensely popular *SimCity*. You should look to the *SimCity* add-on modules for that. Nor is it a god-playing fantasy like *Populous*. *SimEarth* is a true "what if?" simulation, with a huge database at its core. *SimEarth* is based substantially on James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, which views the Earth (or any planet) as a single living organism.

Maxis has taken a good deal of what we know of planetary evolution, from the fiery beginnings to the normally icy endings, and set up that information in a form that can be modified and rearranged with almost limitless variety. Would you like to see the effects of increased water, decreased oxygen, or a different distribution of flora and fauna? *SimEarth* lets you experiment with those conditions, and many more.

THE HERE AND NOW

Those who are more interested in coming up with ways of getting us out of the mess we find ourselves in today can work with the Earth of the late twentieth century. With all the effects of resource mismanagement in place, you must find ways of retracing and rectifying the mistakes of the recent past. Of course, your first order of business will be to get the atmosphere back to somewhere near equilibrium. You're provided with machinery which can alter the atmospheric makeup, but that's a somewhat unrealistic way of dealing with the problem. It would probably be better in the long run to adjust your manufacturing output to lessen pollution, while reseeding depleted areas such



By clicking on the icons at the left, you can show as much or as little information as you wish on the flat projection. It's less confusing just to use basic life, land mass, and water representations as the default display.

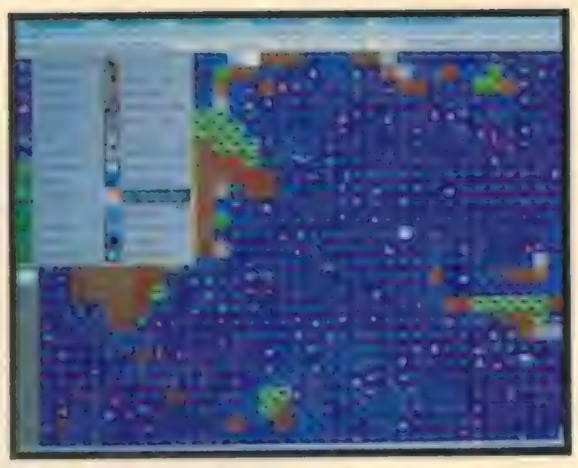
as the Amazon rainforests to decrease the amounts of carbon dioxide.

SimEarth's use of multiple windows and pull-down menus makes it easy to manage all the variables involved here. Simply point and click (a mouse isn't an absolute necessity, but it certainly improves the simulation's manageability) to access maps, charts and graphs, information windows, and action menus. You can choose to view your world as a flat map or a spinning globe, and you can specify the information that's shown on each map, from topographical and meteorological data to information on the dispersion of settlements and cities. Using the cursor, you can roam the planet's surface to easily pinpoint where ecological imbalances or natural disasters may cause problems. And, beyond purely natural development, there is the opportunity to find, define, and influence sentient life as it evolves socially and technologically.



The life distribution chart will tell you where your planet needs some fine-tuning. Using the terrain editor and the biome tool, you can eventually make the planet suitable for higher forms of life.

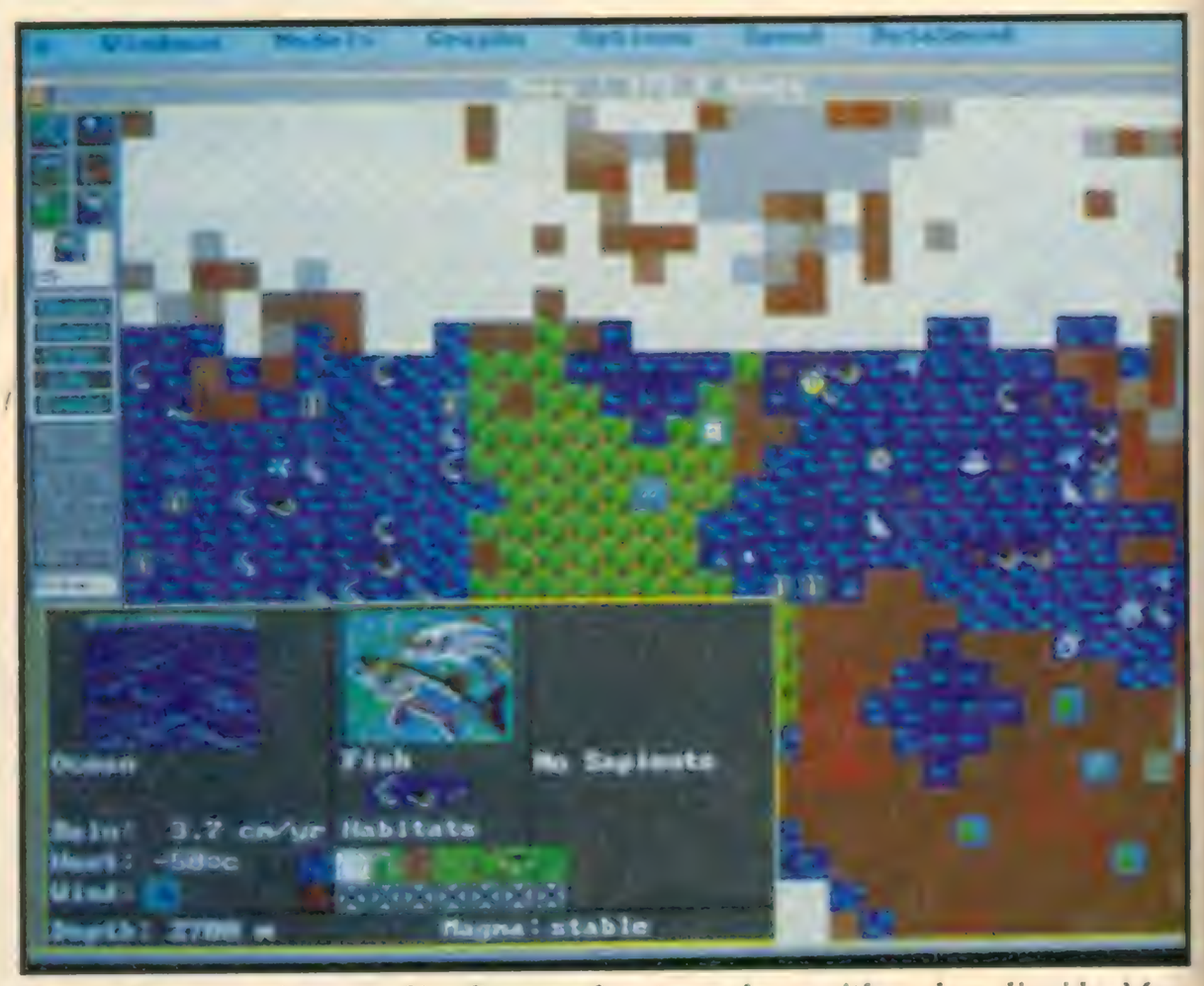
The evolution of our planet (and, by logical extension, other planets) is often shaped by natural disasters such as earthquakes, tidal waves, meteors, and volcanic eruptions. Scientists have hypothesized that the impact of a giant meteor (or alternately, a considerable increase in volcanic activity) could have caused a dust cloud great enough to kill off the vegetation vital to the survival of the dinosaurs, some 65 million years ago. Plate tectonics (the gradual shifting of pieces of the Earth's upper crust) resulted in Australia breaking off from the rest of the continents early on, allowing a unique array of animals to



There's a tendency at first to overuse the planetary modification tools. Remember that you're dealing in terms of thousands or millions of years, so go easy on things like oxygen generation.



SimEarth *doesn't hand you your new planet without first educating you. The help screens and documentation make up an impressive basic planetary science course on their own.*



Even after several years of beefing up the atmosphere with carbon dioxide, Mars is still a pretty chilly place. The newly created seas are warm enough, however, to support some of the hardier types of fish.



By calling up the history chart and clicking on various gases and the air temperature, you can see what effects increased carbon dioxide can have on a planet's average temperature.

evolve there independently. The tools provided in *SimEarth* let you experiment with many such variables, often with surprising results. For instance, increasing volcanic activity only slightly over the historical norm would place enough extra carbon dioxide into the atmosphere to cause the Earth to eventually end up more like Venus.

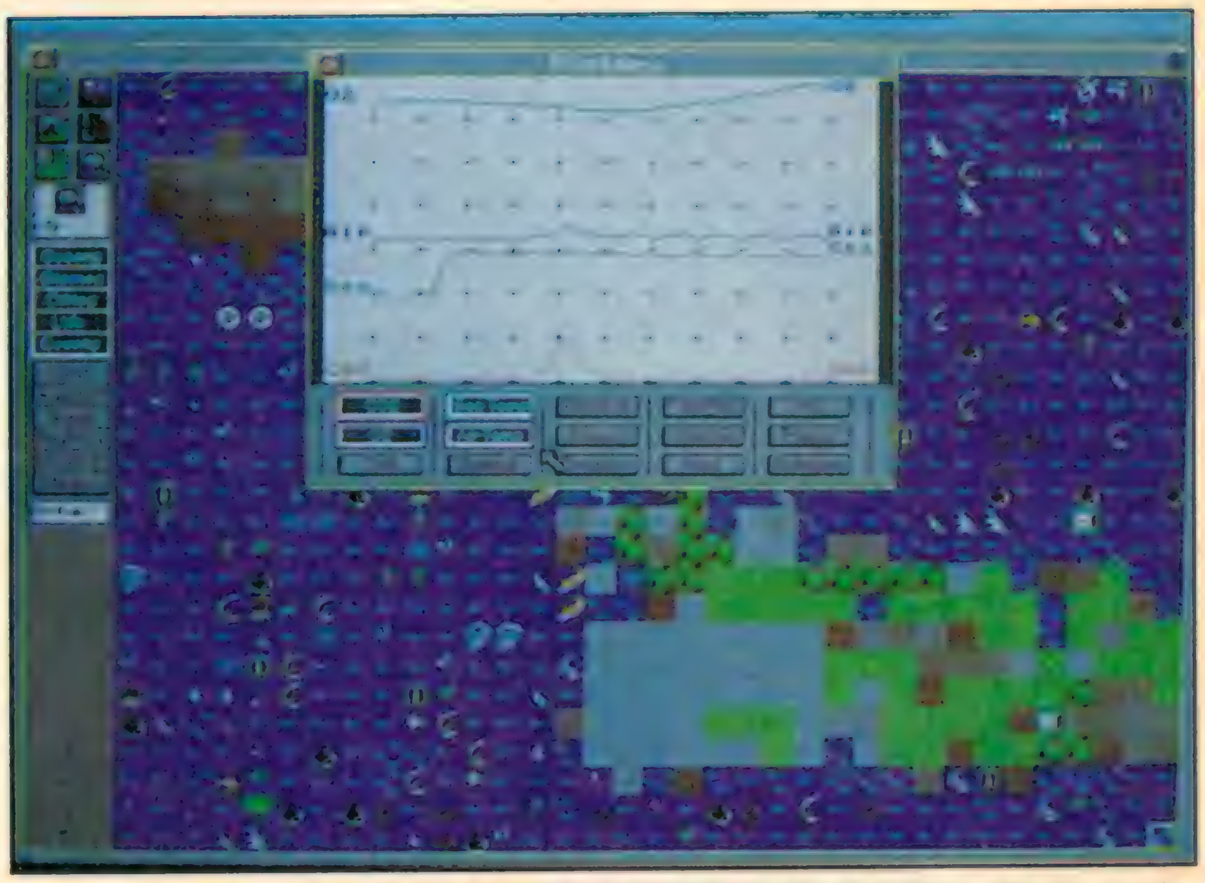
Speaking of Venus — and Mars as well — *SimEarth* also features a terraforming option that puts you in charge of making these neighbors of Earth capable of supporting life. The two planets represent opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to terraforming.



When terraforming a planet, it's essential to develop the widest possible base of biomes (in SimEarth, "biome" refers mainly to plant life) and lower life forms.

Venus, closely approximating the Earth in size and mass, possesses a dense atmosphere of mostly carbon dioxide. Combined with Venus' proximity to the sun (about 25 million miles closer than Earth), this results in an average planetary temperature of 477° Centigrade. To bring the planet's temperature down to something a little less "tropical," you must first replace the carbon dioxide with oxygen, which has a cooling effect. Once things have chilled a bit, you'll be able to drop a few ice meteors onto the surface without having to worry about the water boiling away.

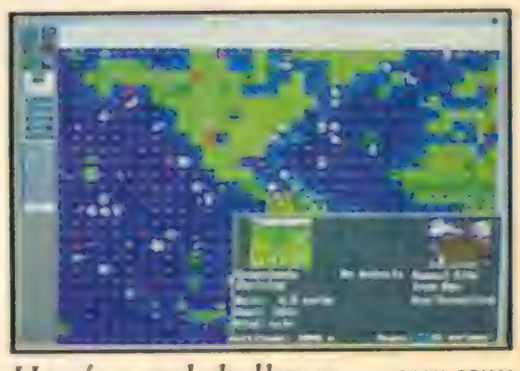
Mars, on the other hand, suffers from too little atmosphere, and from being too far away from the sun. So you must perform the opposite of what you would do on Venus, and supply Mars with air that has enough oxygen to support basic life, but with enough carbon dioxide to initiate the greenhouse effect and the resultant warming.



Terraforming Venus poses problems much different than on Mars. To lessen the greenhouse effect of the dense atmosphere (thus cooling the planet), start with a few oxygenators on the surface.



Although it would seem logical that several ice meteors might cool things off, they only evaporate and increase the greenhouse effect. The key to a permanent cooling is eliminating as much carbon dioxide as possible.

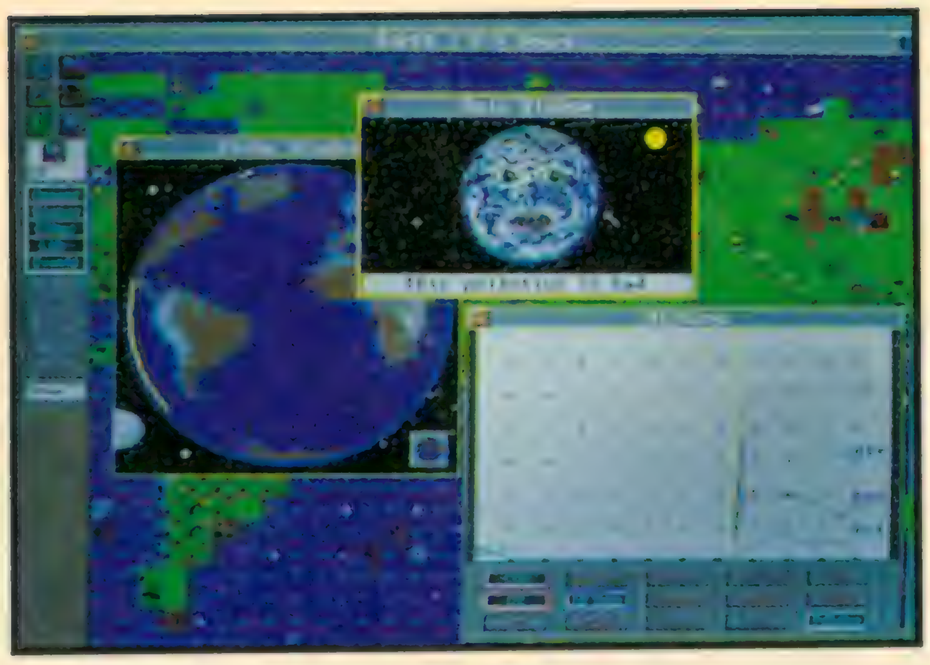


Here's a real challenge — our own planet as it is today. Decades of neglect and policies based on greed and ignorance have brought us to an ecological crossroad.

On both planets, the introduction of life forms is perhaps the trickiest task. Choosing the right type of life from the variety of basic forms is a complex problem, but the timing of the introduction is even more critical. On Venus, for example, introducing life into the seas is a pretty simple matter, once you've lowered the temperature enough. Grasslands and primeval forests are another story, however. All that extra oxygen you've produced to cool the planet means conditions are perfect for extensive burning of any kind of organic matter. Once the fires begin, the extra smoke and carbon dioxide will put you right back where you started.

A MODEL OF DAISIES

Perhaps the most fascinating option in *SimEarth* is Daisyworld, a fictitious planet invented by NASA scientist James Lovelock as a model to illustrate his Gaia hypothesis. Daisyworld simplifies the equation by being a world that supports only daisies. By inserting variations in solar heating and atmospheric composition, the spread or recession of daisies can be controlled. These experiments dramatically show the differences between a vicious circle (positive feedback loop), which usually leads to disas-

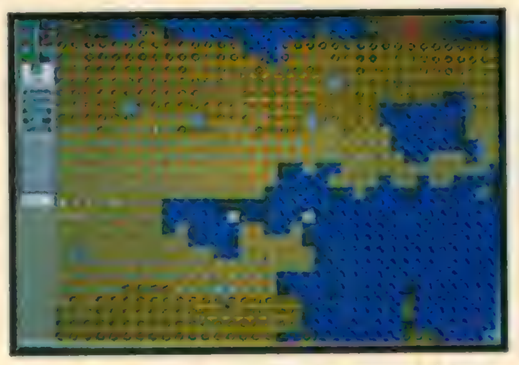


From the reaction you get when you click on the Gaia window, it's obvious that your primary objective should be to immediately eliminate as much pollution as possible.

ter, and a virtuous circle (negative feedback loop), which is embodied in the self-regulating functions of most Earth systems. The Daisyworld scenario of *SimEarth* supports the so-called "strong" Gaia hypothesis, which implies that life is interdependent on the other Earth systems—that is, life influences the geology and climate of Earth, and vice versa.

On a nuts-and-bolts level, *SimEarth* is a well-designed simulation that makes full use of your computer's graphic and processing abilities. The various maps and charts are stunning, in either VGA or low-resolution MCGA (even EGA screens are nicely rendered). With one of the supported sound boards, the accompanying sound effects and music are particularly effective. And the point-and-click interface lets you negotiate the many windows and menus with a minimum of distress. You'll need considerable computing power, though, both in speed and memory. The huge amount of information to be manipulated precludes playing *SimEarth* on anything less than a 286 computer with 640K of RAM and a hard drive.

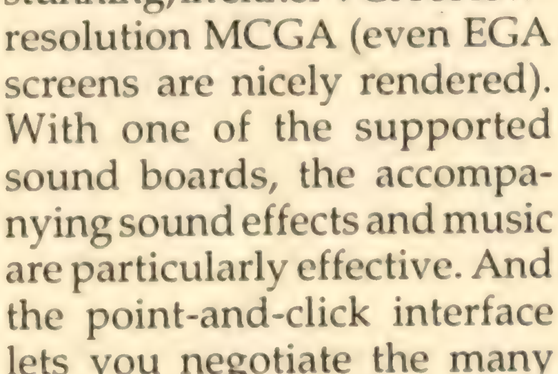
SimEarth is a marvelous creation, so full of detail and imagination that you don't so much play it as experience it. With the environmental problems we face in the next few years, I don't think it's an overstatement to say that everyone could gain valuable insight from a few turns at *SimEarth*. In much the same way as its predecessor, *SimCity*, has been used as a planning and teaching tool by governments and schools, *SimEarth* could also be an extremely useful resource.



Your mission on Daisyworld is to regulate the planetary temperature in the face of increased radiation from the sun. The number and color of the daisies determine how much sunlight reaches the surface, so controlling the flowers' population is essential.

SimEarth is not an easy game to get into immediately because there's a lot of background material to digest before you can really appreciate what's going on. Fortunately, Maxis' documentation is a good read, full of fascinating facts, though not so many as to discourage the casual player. You can jump right in by using the experimental mode, but for a real grasp of what *SimEarth* has to offer, it really helps to study a bit beforehand. I promise you that it's quite painless. And you'll be rewarded by a unique computer gaming experience, a simulation that, hopefully, people will play and think about for years to come.

GP



Daisyworld's sole life form is the daisy, although there are many different varieties of the flower. Since there are no clouds, Daisyworld's albedo (reflectivity coefficient) is a function of the varying shades of daisies.



If sociological and technological development appeals to you, you might want to try your hand at advancing the people of Stag Nation. The key here is somehow to increase the population to the point where the people can progress beyond subsistence living.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, Hercules, and Tandy 16-color graphics; hard disk required; mouse recommended; AdLib, Sound Blaster, SoundMaster, and Tandy sound boards supported.



After unloading the terminally insufferable Two Guys from Andromeda, Roger heads for the planet Magmetheus for a little rest and relaxation.

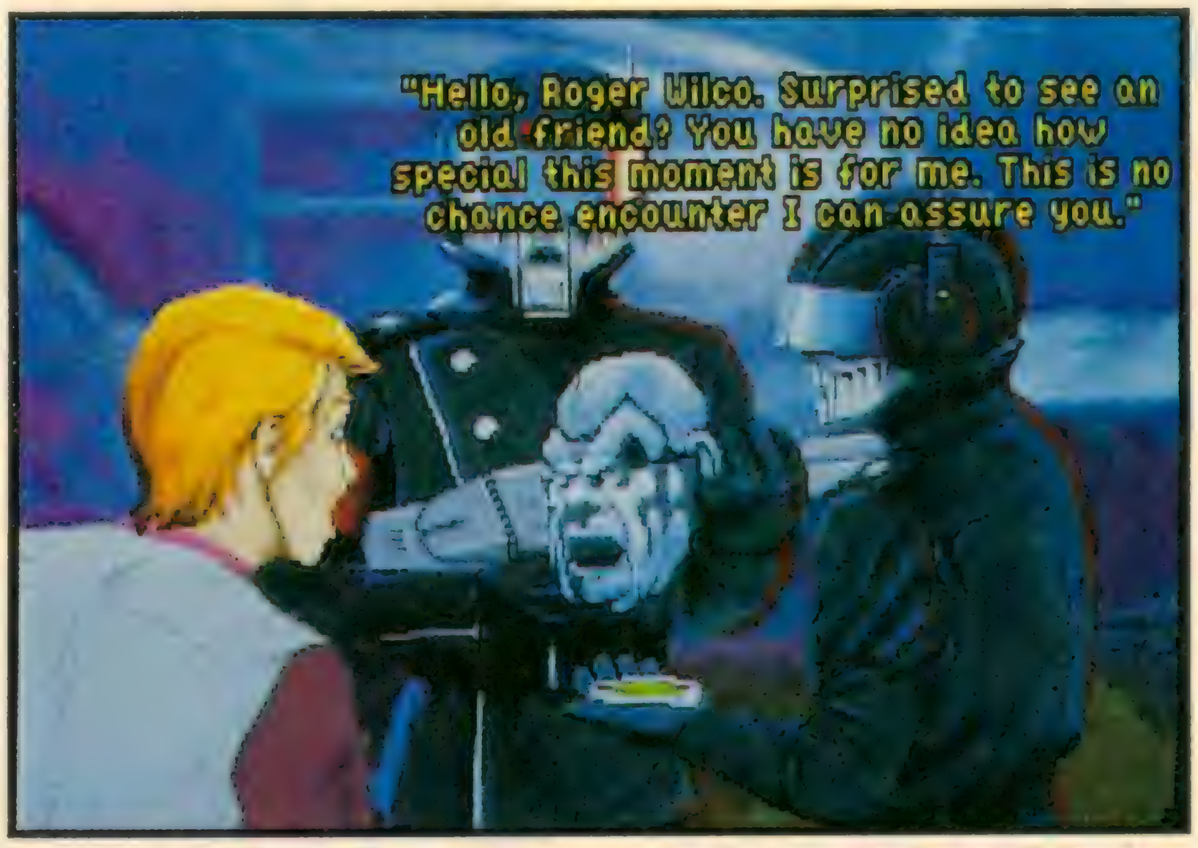
Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers

GARY MEREDITH

So you think computer games are overpriced, that you don't get nearly what you pay for? Well, how's this for a bargain — with *Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers*, you not only get the aforementioned game, but three other games, two of which are yet to be written. How's that for creative marketing on the part of **Sierra On-line**?

Of course, only in the spaced-out world of Roger Wilco, galactic hero and sanitation engineer, are things so convoluted that you experience adventures that are now but a gleam in some designer's eyes. First he's zapped to a terrifying future in *Space Quest XII: Vohaul's Revenge II*, then it's a less-than-relaxing visit to Estros in *Space Quest X: Latex Babes of Estros*. A quick blast from the past, *Space Quest I: The Sarien Encounter*, serves as a prelude to his final confrontation with an old acquaintance who's bent on revenge.

The long-awaited sequel to *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon* does not disappoint in either its storyline or its execution. When we last saw our intrepid hero, he had just dropped off those Two Guys from Andromeda at Sierra's Earth headquarters. As we rejoin



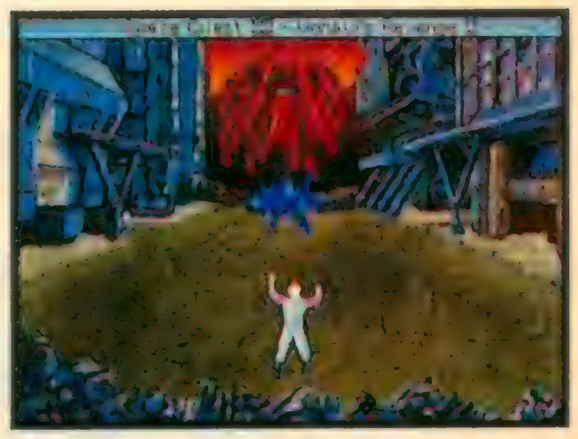
Ever since the forgettable encounter with the Sariens, the Sequel Police have hounded Roger's every misstep. Now they're taking orders from that loutish lump, Sludge Vohaul.

Roger, he's on something of a sabbatical down on the planet Magmetheus.

But Roger is second to none when it comes to attracting trouble, so we're not surprised when the Sequel Police drag him out of his favorite Magmethean watering hole. The Sequel Police, it seems, are only acting under the direction of Roger's old nemesis, Sludge Vohaul. Sludge, still smarting from the defeat he suffered at



Don't believe what you've heard about time rips being fun — unless you enjoy the feeling of having your innards displaced across the entire time-space continuum.



The first order of business on this devastated future Xenon is a little exploration, but stay away from the zombies who roam the streets.

Roger's hands in an earlier adventure, is back to eliminate the one man who could stand in his way of total domination.

Fortunately, Roger has allies, though their identities are as much a mystery to him as they are to us. And when they toss him into a "time rip" that carries him to a devastated planet, Roger's not really certain they did him any favor. The wasted planet is his home world, Xenon, which he soon discovers was the target of a dastardly plot. Summoning all his ingenuity, Roger manages to stow away aboard a Sequel Police patrol ship, then hijack a vessel (a "time pod") which takes him to places, and times, unknown.

While all this is transpiring, you, as Roger, must collect articles to use in your battle against Vohaul. This is the prime directive of all Sierra graphic adventures, but it bears repeating: The lack of any logical use for an object is certainly no reason for leaving it

behind. This includes disgusting cigar butts and sticky gum wrappers. After all, Roger *is* a sanitation engineer, so if anyone can find a use for all those discarded odds and ends, it's him.

Roger's knowledge of time pod navigation is microscopic, but his luck is definitely macro, so it's no surprise that his befuddled fingering of the ship's navigation console lands him in exactly the right place. Of course, based on his past experiences, it's easy to understand why Roger doesn't immediately recognize the fortuity of his arrival on the planet Estros.



Now this is the sort of place a guy like Roger can understand. The sewage control center offers a brief respite from the zombies and killer drones, and provides a few pieces of the Xenon puzzle.

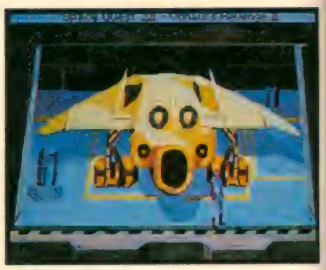
And it appears that Roger's misgivings may be well-founded when he's captured by Zondra, an Amazon with a rather large chip on her shoulder. After accusing Roger of jilting her many years ago, Zondra and her henchwomen haul our boy off to their cave for a torture session involving an electric hair remover that should have been recalled *before* it was released. When a giant sea slug interrupts the girls' fun, some quick thinking saves Roger's epidermis, and earns him an invitation to accompany Zondra on her weekly shopping safari to the Galaxy Galleria.

Inside the Galleria, Roger is able (with the help of a tight black skirt) to pick up enough buckazoids to buy an adaptor for the mini-computer he found back on Xenon. Just to make things a little more challenging, you first must find a way to get into the computer complex on Xenon, so you'll know which part to order from the Radio Shock store at the Galleria.

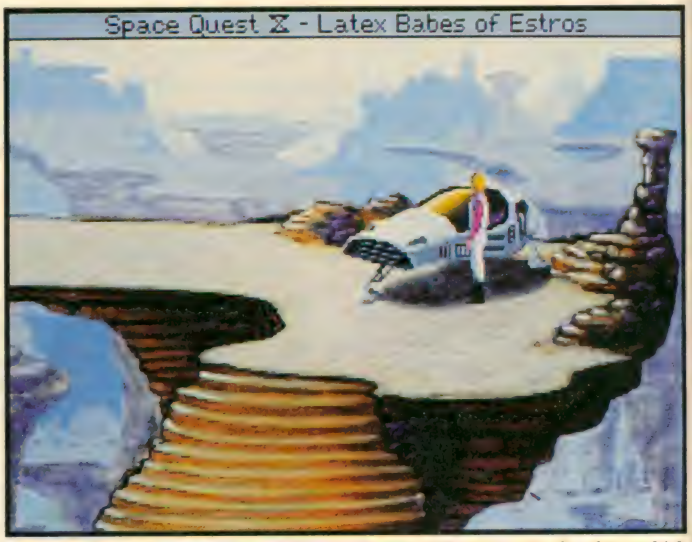
But getting off the Galleria is not nearly as simple as



A Sequel Police patrol ship would be an ideal way out of here, if only you could find a way on board. Don't forget to do a little collecting in the sewers before heading for the ship.



Taking the shortest route possible, you manage to stow away and make the trip up to the dome where the Sequel Police are quartered. The guards preclude any extensive exploration at the moment, however.



With the guards breathing down your neck, you're not too particular about which destination code you punch into the console. Remember that the Sequel Police will be able to trace your trip.



After he narrowly avoids becoming the main course for a pumped-up pigeon, our hero drops in on a little Estronian welcoming party led by the spurned Zondra.



Zondra's the kind of woman Roger has often dreamed of, but this doesn't look like the start of a beautiful relationship. Still, this can't be any worse than what the pursuing Sequel Police have in store — or can it?



Thoreen definitely has some unresolved animosities, but what you're concerned about now is escaping. Defeating the approaching sea slug will get you on Zondra's good side.



Mecca for tasteless fashions and overpriced merchandise, the Galaxy Galleria could be an important stop before heading back to Xenon for a duel with Vohaul.



While you might think that a "manly" man like our Roger would rather be out doing something, well...manly, a visit to Sack's should definitely be included on his itinerary.

getting on it. In one of the trickier parts of the game, an exact sequence of actions must take place in order for Roger to elude the Sequel Police.

The Galleria section, as well as a couple of other areas in the game, are good examples of why it's so important to save often in this type of game. It's not unusual to do a lot of experimenting to get a sequence just right, and if you have to go through a whole chain of events over and over again, you may find yourself quickly growing tired of it all.



It's obvious that there's very little that Roger won't do to reach his goals. For some reason, this getup fools everyone except the usually dense Sequel Police.

Then too, as with other Sierra efforts, instant termination is an all-too-common occurrence. If you're really cautious, you might end up filling several directories with saved games, but even so it's better to be safe than lying facedown on an alien world with a smoking crater in your back.

Once you've found the right computer part and managed to make your way into the Xenon computer complex, you still must unravel the Escheresque layout of the platforms inside. As if the design of the walkways isn't confusing enough, there are also android guards to deal with. Everything leads to a climax that may pose more questions than it answers, but you've had so much fun getting there that you hardly notice.

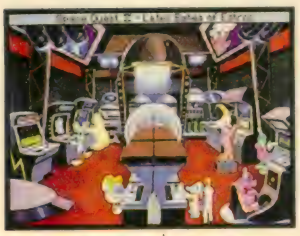
For those expecting the usual Space Quest surroundings, only with better graphics, there may be a few surprises. The most obvious is the new interface, which completely does away with the old type-entry system. In its place is an icon-based point-and-click interface for use with a mouse or joystick (you can use



There's something in the bar you need, but these fun-loving guys aren't about to let you get to it. Perhaps a commotion outside the bar would divert their attention.

the cursor keys, but it's unwieldy and slow). There's a drop-down menu bar with all the usual controls, but most of the important action icons can be accessed by clicking the right mouse button.

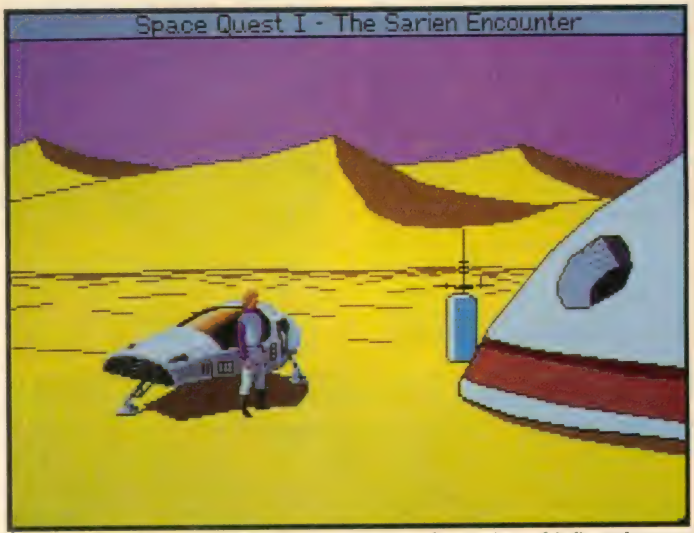
It took awhile for many of the Sierra aficionados in the office to get used to the new interface. After a while, however, most hardly missed those tussles with the text parser that used to be such an inherent part of the Space Quest, King's Quest, and Leisure Suit Larry series.



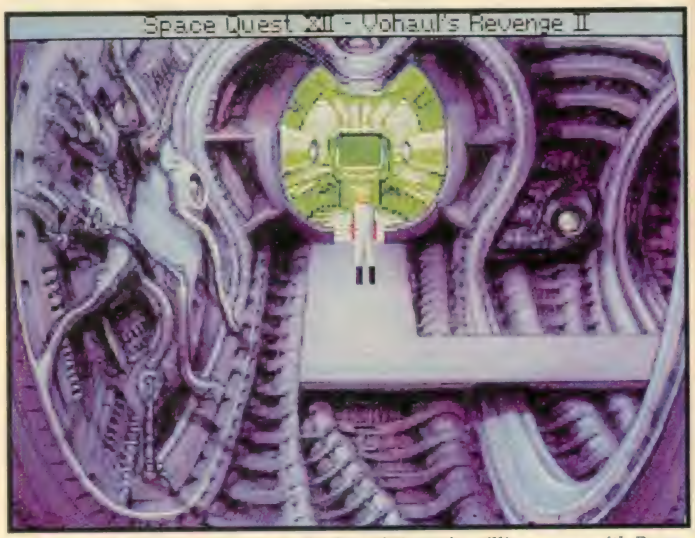
Some things never change. Roger is mightily tempted to play the latest version of Astro Chicken, but he really needs to find a way off this interplanetary shopping mall.

The other prominent difference in this latest installment is the new graphics. Going from 16 colors to 256 colors is a big jump, especially when you're tinkering with one of computer gaming's legends, and Sierra has handled it well. None of the original charm has been lost, and lots of detail and depth have been added. Especially in the treatment of backgrounds, there is a marked resemblance to some Dynamix offerings (Dynamix recently became a subsidiary of Sierra).

Finally, the soundtrack, when played through one of the many supported sound boards, is up to Sierra's usual high standards. The segueing of melodies as you move from store to store inside the Galaxy Galleria is particularly effective. If you're the kind of person who abhors shopping centers, you might even have an attack of mall-terror shakes during the Galleria segments.



It seems like only yesterday that Roger was a 16-color novice on his first adventure. The rest of the universe, and computer graphics technology, seem to have passed Ulence Flats by.



In the computer's central control, the fate of Xenon's millions rests with Roger. Calling his impending discovery unsettling would be the understatement of the millennium.

If you're looking for valiant, stone-faced, lantern-jawed heroes fearlessly undertaking noble, sacred quests in total altruism, forget it. Not here! No way, unh-unh, nope, not a chance. This is Roger Wilco we're talking about, remember? The key word in *Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers* is "fun." Anyone with a yen for irreverent, off-the-wall mayhem (the standard descriptive phrase for any Space Quest game) won't be disappointed with Captain Wilco's latest exploits.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; 80286 or faster computer; hard disk required; MCGA or VGA graphics; major sound boards supported; mouse or joystick recommended.



The Acme Detective Agency has certainly made great strides since your last hitch with them. Its former headquarters could have been used as a dictionary illustration for the adjective "seedy."

Where in America's Past Is Carmen Sandiego?

GARY MEREDITH

You thought you'd seen the last of Carmen Sandiego and her gang when you nabbed her for time crimes, only a few short months ago. It seems, however, that there hasn't been a prison built yet that's secure enough to keep the resourceful Ms. Sandiego incarcerated for very long, because she's back with a vengeance in *Where in America's Past Is Carmen Sandiego?*



The Electronic Mail module often receives important information concerning a suspect's appearance or habits.

Carmen has a new gang of henchmen now, and Time Bureau reports indicate that she's got her sights set on famous icons of American history. Acme Detective Agency has once again been given the task of bringing Carmen and her gang to justice, which means they'll need to hire extra Time Detectives for the job. That, of course, is where you come in.

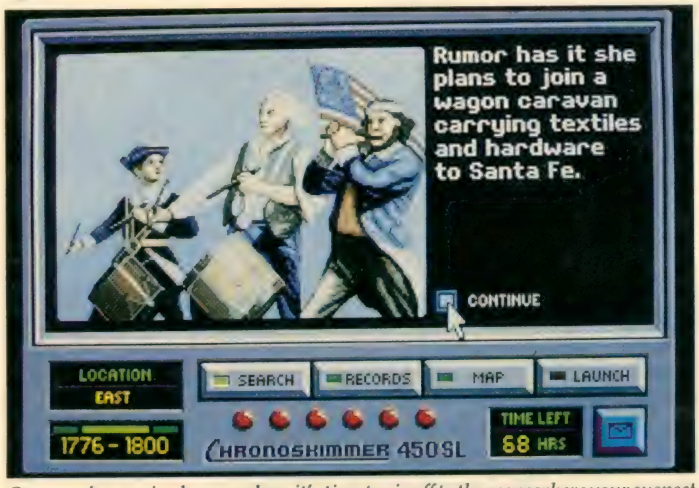
Unfortunately, the folks at Acme seem to have a bad memory for faces, and the personnel office's cluttered files on past employees aren't much help either, so you'll have to start at the bottom even if you've worked for them before. Although Acme is known for quick promotions based on the number of cases solved, the difficulty level of your assignments increases in direct proportion to your climb up the corporate ladder.



Every time you sign in, you're shown your current job title and the number of cases you've completed. The cases get tougher with each successful assignment.



Your boss is already favorably impressed with your work. Stretch, the company tracking hound, is still not sure you have what it takes.



Once you've received your orders, it's time to zip off to the scene where your suspect was last spotted. The sophisticated sleuthing equipment in your Chronoskimmer can pick up the coldest of trails.

Your first step is to sign in with the secretary at Acme. The appearance of the office has improved considerably with Acme's new-found prosperity, but there seems to have been a corresponding slide in friendliness. Until you've successfully completed a few cases, in fact, you won't get much more than a perfunctory acknowledgment from Acme's director, and a growl from Stretch, the company tracking hound.

Once you've signed in, you'll be given your most important piece of equipment — a brand new-Chronoskimmer 450SL, with a computer system that's greatly improved over the setups found in earlier Chronoskimmers. If you've worked for Acme before, the controls on the Chronoskimmer will be no surprise, and even if you haven't, the interface is straightforward enough to operate intuitively.



Acme's recent prosperity has bred a new, strictly business attitude — no casual banter with the receptionist nowadays.

A new feature of this model is the Electronic Mail module. This can provide you with information beyond what

you're able to pick up from direct investigation, so it's a good idea to activate the Mail icon whenever it flashes. In travel mode, the Chronoskimmer displays a map of the U.S., divided into five geographic regions (East, South, Midwest, Southwest, and West) and nine segments of time (from the earliest colonial days to the present).

With earlier games in **Broderbund**'s Carmen Sandiego series, you were given only a few possible destinations for each trip, so you could often make the correct choice by simple process of elimination. Now you can choose from all 45 destinations for each time hop. This puts an extra premium on your knowledge of American history, since there are so many *wrong* places and times to visit and no way of deducing the right one by "weeding out" your destination.



Travel in the Chronoskimmer is a matter of displacement in both time and *space. There's more accuracy with this new model, but there are also more chances to take a wrong turn.*

There is one feature of the new travel system which should prove to be a big help. Each of the five regions can be accessed on a subsidiary map that provides additional information regarding each state's entrance into the Union. Since clues sometimes refer to statehood dates, this feature can be a valuable resource.

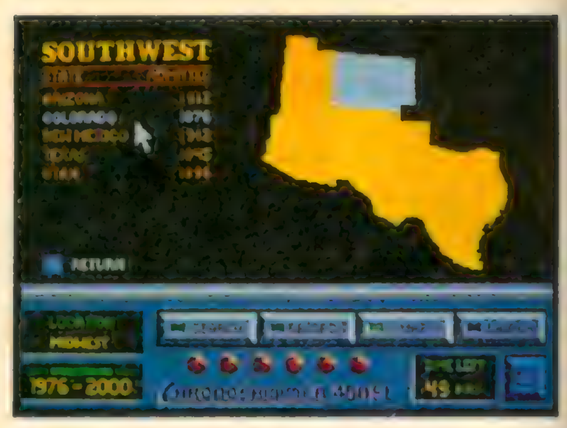


Traveling to San Francisco of the early 20th century reveals an all-too-familiar scene. You'll also find a clue which leads to the identification of the suspect. Now all you need to do is secure a warrant and track down the miscreant.

A case begins when Acme receives a bulletin from the Time Bureau, giving a description of the stolen item and a starting place for your investigation. When you reach the scene of the crime, you're given a thumbnail sketch of the historical significance of the location. Then it's time to start questioning witnesses and verifying rumors.

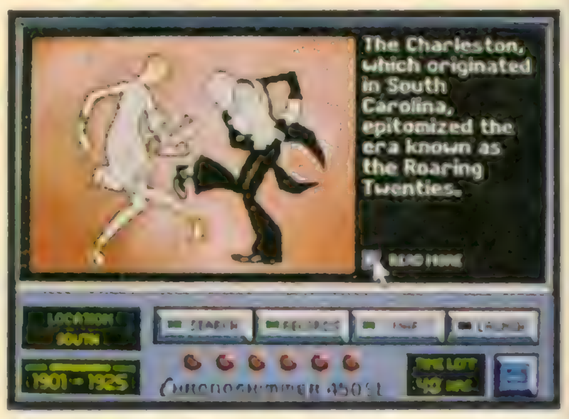
With luck (and an obliging computer) you'll soon receive your first piece of Electronic Mail, usually a hint concerning the suspect's physical appearance or other traits which may be helpful in determining his or her identity. Every bit of data specifically concerning the suspect should be immediately entered into the computer.

Early cases require you to collect only two or three pieces of information on the criminal before the computer can make a positive ID and issue a warrant. In later cases, you'll need to acquire considerably more data before the computer can narrow the selection down to one suspect. This can be rather frustrating, because you can often track down a suspect before you've accumulated enough evidence to make an arrest.



The travel screen's zoom feature allows you to learn a few more details about a prospective destination. Often, the information on a state's admission to the Union will help you pinpoint a time and place you need to visit.

In situations like this, you can try your luck by adding your own clues into the computer in an attempt to get a positive ID. Actually, this tactic succeeds more often than it fails, especially if you limit yourself to a category with a small number of selections, such as eye or hair color. But there is the chance, though slim, that two suspects could have highly similar physical features.



You know the suspect was seen in the South—but during what time period? You could make a guess, but if you're wrong, the time spent on the extra leg of your trip could mean the difference between success and failure.

Another drawback to this tactic is the time it consumes. You must complete each assignment within a time limit, which varies with the difficulty of the case. Within that limit, you're expected to track down the suspect, organize the evidence, get a warrant issued, and make the arrest. Each question asked, each rumor overheard, each bit of evidence entered takes time off the clock.



You'll know you're on the right track when you discover one of Carmen's henchmen shadowing you. If you don't see at least one, you can safely assume you've lost the trail.



Now that you've reconciled the spatial and temporal indices, you'll be able to resume your chase. Remember, you must acquire an arrest warrant before you can nab your prey.

You'll be amazed at how quickly your allotted time gets eaten up, especially in the higher levels of the game, where you need to uncover so much more evidence to make an arrest. The time constraint also mean that you must make efficient use of your Chronoskimmer —if you hope to solve a case, you can't afford the luxury of simply joyriding through time.

If you've played any of the games in the Carmen Sandiego series before, the investigation routine offers no surprises. For the uninitiated, the basic routine consists of picking up as many clues as possible from a site and using them to discern the criminal's next destination. Most clues are somewhat cryptic, demanding a fairly deep knowledge of American history. For example, a witness might mention that he heard the suspect speak of visiting the site of William McKinley's assassination. If you don't know the date and location of that event, you're out of luck.

As the cases get tougher, the clues are harder to come by, and they're also more obscure. Broderbund has provided a comprehensive encyclopedia of American history, *What Happened When*, to help you out, but the real fun comes from picking your brain for the answers. Of course, if you missed school the day your teacher covered William Henry Harrison, references to his campaign slogan and his connection to American Indians might be lost on you. But you'll usually find yourself turning to the encyclopedia only as a last resort.



You've almost caught up with your quarry, and you still have 23 hours remaining in which to make the arrest. It appears that this will be one of the more successful cases of your short career.



As you close in, Ms. Sandiego's minions will throw everything at you in a last-ditch attempt to foil the arrest. Your suspect's favorite bird is a bald eagle, but it's certain this character never appeared on a coin.



The suspect is holed up, just waiting to be flushed out by old Stretch. He's pretty excited, since he hasn't bitten a crook all week.

You may become so engrossed in journeying down some of the lesser-known pathways of American history that you forget to *play* the game. As with the other Carmen Sandiego installments, *Where in America's Past Is Carmen Sandiego?* is an outstanding educational tool which makes acquiring considerable knowledge of this country's past an almost subliminal process. Before you know it, you've mentally compiled a fairly complete historical outline that inspires further study. If you have children, this game and its predecessors are almost necessities of the computer age.



This case is closed, but you'll soon learn that the job of tracking down time criminals never ends. Who knows— someday you just might earn the right to have your name displayed in Acme's Hall of Fame.

Where in America's Past Is Carmen Sandiego? is a worthy addition to the illustrious series. The graphics, as usual, are excellent, the musical score is clever and topical, and the interface makes for lively play. Some may tire of the actual crime-solving routine after 15 or 20 cases, but the challenge of sifting through the historical esoterica should keep most players on the trail of the illusive Carmen for a long time.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory for VGA/MCGA graphics, 512K for EGA, CGA, Hercules, and Tandy 16-Color graphics; hard disk required; supports all major sound boards; mouse or joystick optional.

ABC MONDAY

GARY MEREDITH

Are you still griping about the last Super Bowl? Maybe you think the game would have been just a wee bit closer if you had been coaching Denver? Or would you prefer to see Atlanta and San Diego playing in the championship for a change? If you don't happen to have the cash to buy a team of your own, you may think that grumbling is your only outlet. Wrong again, O Fan of the Sacred Pigskin!

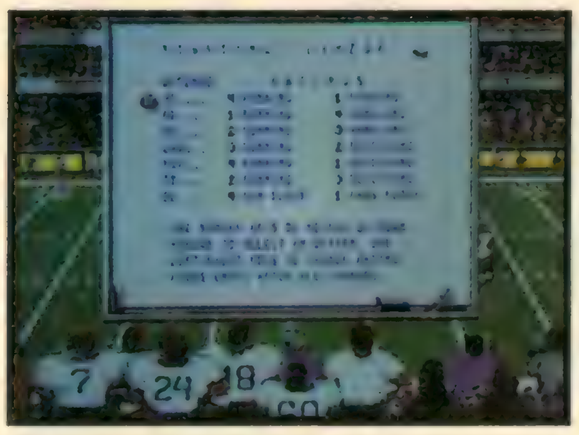
ABC Monday Night Football from **Data East** not only puts you in charge of the destinies of 28 National Football League teams, but it also does so through an interface any fan can appreciate — the familiar commentary of Frank, Al, and Dan during their one big game of the week. From the opening theme (reproduced fairly well on a standard PC speaker) to the smiling face of Frank Gifford, it's all here. Until the advent of true digital interactive video, this is about as close as computer players are going to get to the real thing.



The appearance of this face has meant "Monday Night Football" to millions for 20 years.

When sports games — and football simulations in particular — were first marketed for PCs, you had to make a choice between good graphics and accurate, complex game play. That's not the case with *ABC Monday Night Football*. You have a lot of options and plays, all with graphics that allow you to see exactly what your own team and its opponents are doing. Lose yardage on a draw play? You can see why and make adjustments for the next time it's run.

Game play is quite simple whether you use the keyboard or a joystick. After you set the length of the quarters, the ball is kicked off, spotted, and the playcalling screen overlay appears. Three plays each for offense and defense are displayed, but you can scroll through several others if these don't suit you. The game comes with over 30 offensive plays and a dozen or so defensive formations, and plays of your own design can be added with the Playmaker Utility.



Once you've devised the plays, you have to find the right people to run them. After all, you won't run many successful sweeps without some good guards.

Once you've settled on a play, press the fire button and the teams reappear. Of course, calling the play is only the beginning. The moves still must be executed, and that's where the smooth interface of this game really helps. Because the graphics are so good, you can really see what's happening, and you're further helped by on-screen icons that identify the players under your direct control.

Executing a running play is as simple as moving the joystick or the cursor key in the direction of the chosen ball carrier prior to the snap. Control then shifts to the runner so that you can exhibit some of the broken-field running that's made you a legend in your own mind.

Passing is only a little more complex. You must drop back and hold down the fire button, which allows you to scroll through the eligible receivers, represented by the helmets at the bottom of the screen. Releasing the button gives you the viewpoint of the chosen receiver, and if he's open, you tap the fire button again to release the ball. If he's covered, you can hold the fire button down again to find another receiver.

The kicking game is simple as well. Once selected, a punt is automatic (fake punts can be



Remember that the longer the play, the greater the chance of failure. It's usually best to start with the running game or a short passing game until you've discovered your opponent's tendencies.

NIGHT FOOTBALL



Although you've called a passing formation, you can still run out of it if you don't get the defense you like. Just make sure you've got someone behind you for the handoff.

called and are run as passing plays). Kicking a field goal or an extra point utilizes a system of power meters similar to those found in most golf simulations.

The variables of the game — all those things on the periphery, such as penalties, injuries, and sideline entertainment — can be found in abundance as well. The refs aren't going to catch everything, but they'll usually see more than they miss. A word of warning: The refs are especially sensitive about pass interference and intentional grounding. With the latter in particular, it's almost always better to eat the ball than throw it at the last second and risk a penalty. In fact, there are a couple of Hall of Fame quarterbacks from the 70s who probably wouldn't have been so famous if these refs were throwing the hankies back then.

Injuries are also a factor in *ABC Monday Night Football*. You never know when they're going to hit you, so it's a wise coach who fields a team with talented backup players — especially at skill positions. As for the sideline entertainment ... well, what game would be complete without a few shots of the cheerleaders or a player yelling "Hi, Mom!" to the camera?

The Playmaker Utility adds another dimension to what is already an excellent simulation. With it, you can become the next offensive or defensive gridiron genius. When you combine the number of options afforded each player with your individual control over the team members, you get an almost infinite variety of plays that can be devised. So you can come up with a new defense to rival the Bears' Number 46, or an offense with pass patterns so complex you'll need five Steve Largents to run it. Try to add a couple of old single wing plays to see how they'd stack up against modern defenses.

Another option would be to see how the wishbone offense would work in the pros. Hey — if it can be done on a football field, you can probably put it in the playbook of *ABC Monday Night Football*. The Team Modification Utility is an adjunct of the Playmaker Utility. Once you've designed your plays, you just need to go out and get the right team to run them. Remember those five Largents, for example?

Until virtual reality simulations are practical, we'll have to be satisfied with computers, and no PC game is going to give you the true feel of an athletic event — there are just too many intangibles and subjective impressions to cram into 640K. But *ABC Monday Night Football* is as close as anyone has come to realizing the true football experience.

The graphics and the sound (given the limitations of the PC speaker) are wonderful, and the TV-like interface makes game play very intuitive. OK, so it's not football season. When did that stop any true fan of the game?

GP



Injuries are always a part of the game, and it's especially bad if you lose a player at a skill position. Always make sure you have quality backups, especially for your quarterback and running back.



If there's one thing the refs don't like, it's intentionally grounding the ball to avoid a loss. Sometimes they'll even call it when you have an eligible receiver relatively close by.

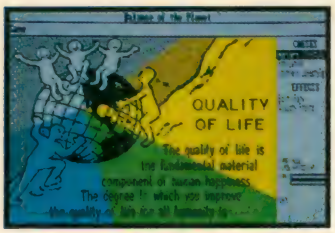
Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for Tandy); VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-Color, or Hercules graphics; joystick recommended.

BALANCE OF THE

SELBY BATEMAN

One of the most interesting and important computer games of the year surely must be **Chris Crawford Games'** *Balance of the Planet* (distributed by **Accolade**), an excellent example of how entertainment and education can be blended into an interactive electronic experience.

This is not a game that will have you hanging on the edge of your seat in suspense, nor is it necessarily relaxing escapism. What Crawford has done is compile a tremendous amount of information concerning all aspects of the Earth's environment, then arranged and explained that information to make it easily understandable.



Improving the quality of human life in Balance of the Planet *is fundamentally entwined with the quality of all life on Earth.*

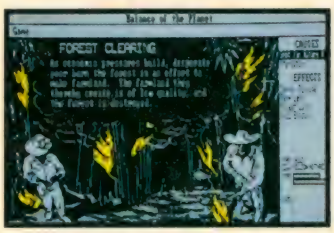
The game player moves among 150 screens of environmental information, peeling away each topic like the layers of an onion. What are the connections between such topics as riparian habitats, heavy metal use, ozone, oil spills, and solar energy? *Balance of the Planet* makes it inescapably clear that these issues and many more *are indeed* fundamentally connected.

The net result is that a player comes away from the game realizing — perhaps for the first time — how subtly interrelated are all the questions having to do with our planet's environment. This is powerful stuff. And while *Balance of the Planet's* relatively passive and static approach may not help it rack up the sales of a *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, the game's impact as an educational tool for teachers, parents, and bright students is admirable. I can't imagine a better classroom aid for teaching environmental issues than *Balance of the Planet*.

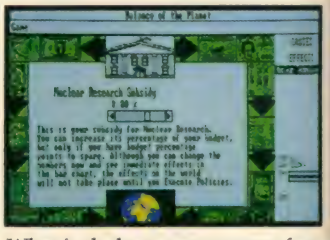
Crawford is best-known for designing such computer games as *Eastern Front*, one of the first military strategy computer games, and the attention-getting *Balance of the Planet* and *Balance of the Planet 1990*, geopolitical strategy games. Based in Milpitas, California, he has a reputation for thinking creatively and deeply about computer game designs, a reputation that is enhanced by this latest effort.

Balance of the Planet is based on a simple idea: As the United Nations' High Commissioner of the Environment, you have the power to levy taxes and grant subsidies to a wide range of businesses, environmental efforts, special issues, and the like in order to improve the Earth's increasingly ravaged environment. The policies you adopt through your taxation and subsidization set in motion an ever-increasing number of ripple effects throughout the world.

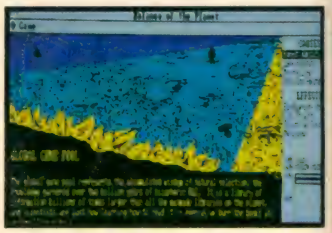
You have nine turns in each game, with each turn representing five years. By the year 2035, your point totals indicate your relative success or failure. As Crawford points out in the excellent 136-page manual, don't be discouraged if at first your efforts result in low scores and an environmental mess. Just remember that the environment is a cause-and-effect balancing act.



The destruction of the Earth's forests is one of the most controversial and dangerous environmental problems.



What is the best power source for a sustainable future? Will you increase or decrease nuclear power research? And what will be the ripple effects?

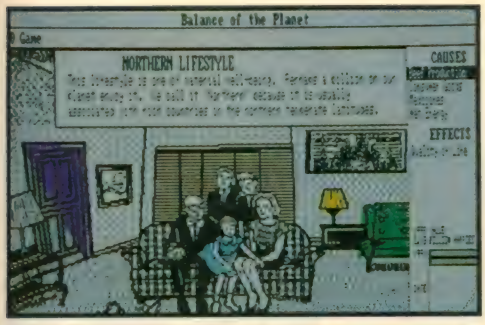


The future of our world is directly related to the health of the global gene pool of all living entities. Will your policies promote or destroy the future of that extraordinary resource?

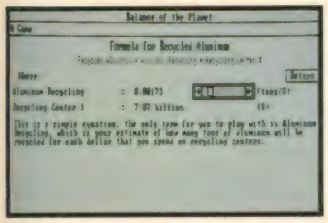
The game opens with a screen labelled Results For 1990. The player returns to this screen after each five-year turn. On the left is a list of positive points such as biodiversity, forest life, marine life, and sustainability. On the right is a list of negative points such as land abuse, skin cancer, radiation waste, and starvation. Your goal is to increase the point totals on the positive side and decrease those on the negative side.

Another important screen is the one labelled Policy Summary, which shows such sources of revenue as the beef tax, the CFC (chloroflourocarbon) tax, and the natural gas

PLANET



The richest humans on the planet tend to be concentrated in the northern temperate latitudes. What is good for their material well-being is not necessarily good for those elsewhere on the planet.



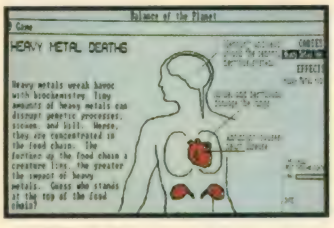
Playing with the formulas in Balance of the Planet can give you a much better understanding of the complexities of our environmental problems.

tax as well as funding expenses such as bioresearch, nuclear energy, solar energy, and dam use. You set your policies by increasing or decreasing specific revenue sources and specific subsidies. For example, Crawford states in his manual that you'll almost certainly want to tax CFCs heavily, since they have been implicated in the loss of the Earth's protective ozone layer. At the same time, you may want to increase your subsidy for solar energy or for nuclear energy — depending on your priorities.

As you begin to set your policies, you move from the Results screen by choosing a topic you want to investigate in more detail. You might start by selecting Heavy Metal Points (metal toxins such as lead poisons, not Motley Crue!). A screen appears that informs you that you must take responsibility for deaths related to lead and other metal toxins. From the Causes menu of that screen, choose Heavy Metal Deaths and you get a screen showing information on different forms of heavy metal deaths.

Selecting Heavy Metal Use then leads to Heavy Metal Tax, and you can decide whether you want to increase or decrease heavy metals taxes. There are also other paths which lead to such topics as water pollution, the price of heavy metals, and industrial input. Remember, every action you take has multiple effects. For instance, what effect would increasing the tax on heavy metals have on the economy in relation to industrial costs? Contrarily, if you decrease the tax, the expanded use of heavy metals may raise toxicity levels.

And so it goes throughout *Balance of the Planet*, as you move from topic to topic, learning a great deal about a host of environmental topics while you make decisions about them. In addition to the substantial amount of information presented on the game screens, almost 100 pages of Crawford's manual is devoted to one-page overviews of the major topics

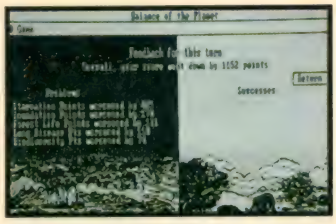


As High Commissioner of the Environment, how will you respond to the problems posed by the increasing number of deaths related to heavy metals use?

under consideration — from acid rain and beef production to ultraviolet light and water pollution. The game and the manual combine to produce a short course on the central issues facing us all.

A computer game that tries to address a topic as complex and as controversial as the environment will inevitably be criticized as somewhat simplistic and biased, and to some extent that has to be true. However, Crawford has built into the game options to change not only the bias he brings to the game, but also the fundamental mathematical formulas on which *Balance of the Planet* is built.

There are built-in pronuclear, environmentalist, industrialist, and third-world biases that you can choose; by changing the equations within the game, you can create your own personal bias. As Crawford points out in the manual, letting players adjust the values underlying the game not only solves the bias problem, but forces players to examine their own values as well.



After each turn you can check the results of your policies. Don't let your problems outnumber your successes, or the world and everything in it will suffer.

Balance of the Planet is a sprawling, information-laden computer game that makes an important contribution in raising our awareness of and knowledge about the environment. Don't purchase this game expecting an escapist romp or similar light entertainment. It's an intriguing and painless way for thoughtful game players to grapple with some of the complexities of our endangered Earth.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, or CGA graphics; mouse optional but recommended.

BREACH 2

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

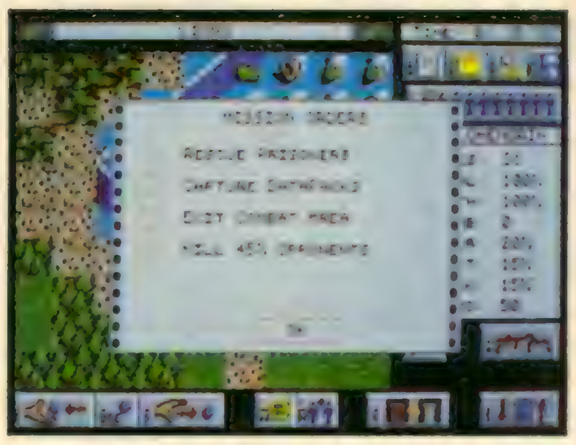
The original *Breach* was published in 1987 as an offshoot of Omnitrend's successful *Universe 2*, which featured a lot of boarding battles involving space marines. *Breach* combined a sophisticated squad-level combat simulation with a dash of sci-fi role-playing adventure (the whole package is reminiscent of the *Aliens* movie). Although the game was somewhat awkward to play (no diagonal moves were allowed, for instance), it became a cult favorite, spawning fanzines and dozens of user-developed supplementary battle scenarios.

Breach 2, the much-anticipated sequel, is not exactly a new game: Omnitrend originally released it in the spring of 1990. Distribution problems kept it from finding its market, however, so Omnitrend joined forces with **Mindcraft**, under whose logo the game now appears, this time with ample distribution and support.

In both games, the player assumes the role of a squad leader of space marines, embroiled in a tough series of battles against a highly intelligent and well-armed enemy allied with various beasties and alien life forms. After each successful battle, your squad leader's abilities and experience level increase in the classic role-playing manner.

In the original *Breach*, the only way to resurrect a dead squad leader — even one in whom you might have invested many hours of intense game play — was to make your own backups; in other words, if the guy died, he vanished from the program, along with all of his accumulated talents and experience points. Fortunately, this time around, the squad leader's advancements are permanently recorded, so that if he dies in his sixth battle, you can refight it immediately with all the abilities he had gained from his first five combats.

There is a great variety of interesting weapons and accessories available to your marines: neutron bombs that wipe out enemy life forms without damaging structures



Breach 2 *comes with a wide variety of missions, some requiring stealth, and some requiring firepower. Most of them, sooner or later, have a lot of bang-bang.*

(important in some missions), lightweight armor that makes the wearer almost invisible (a la *Predator*), and proximity charges that can be emplaced like Claymore mines to protect your flanks or provide a nasty surprise for any enemy troops trying to sneak up on you.

An equally wide variety of missions is included — some require lots of firepower, some require cunning and stealth. Supplementary mission disks are available, and the Mission Builder program included with the package allows you to create custom battles or modify existing scenarios.

Perhaps the most interesting feature, however, is the introduction of the "interlocking game systems" concept being created around *Breach 2*. In the months ahead, when Mindcraft releases its mammoth game of tactical space combat, *Rules of Engagement*, players will be able to insert *Breach 2* into the context of much larger campaigns. Thus, when a planetary invasion or a boarding attack occurs in *Rules of Engagement*, game play automatically segues into the *Breach 2* combat program.

While the graphics have a pleasantly old-fashioned look, hearkening back to a simpler era in computer gaming, they are certainly colorful and thoroughly adequate for most as-



The scenario-builder allows you to design new battles or modify existing ones, and is pleasingly easy to use.



Send scouts out ahead, and don't neglect security on your flanks.

pects of game play. Some of the sound effects are delightful, and include lots of dandy ray-gun noises and hissing, growling, alien critters (our favorites are the pestiferous but seldom lethal "wadgels," blue-skinned varmints that shoot poisoned quills and are sometimes annoyingly hard to kill).

Some words of caution, however, are in order when it comes to the interface. The first *three* mice we tried to use on *Breach 2* either did not work at all or — most aggravatingly — worked only some of the time, and unpredictably at that. A quick call to Omnitrend revealed that, yes, there were problems with early-model mice, and if we installed a recent model mouse, the problem should be corrected. We did, and it wasn't.

In fact, the only time we could get the program to run properly with a mouse was when we used a fast 386 computer with a six-month-old mouse. Based on our experience, then, we recommend that consumers with slower, older computers and mice just resign themselves to using keyboard controls — which, until the learning curve kicks in, is about as graceful as trying to write sonnets with a chisel.

Once your fingers get used to the multitude of keyboard moves, *Breach 2* plays decently enough, and becomes, in fact, a compelling game of tactical combat. One reason the antediluvian keyboard interface works is because the battles tend to unfold slowly and deliberately, giving you ample time to ponder your squad's maneuvers and tactics, and mull over which keystroke to use in a given situation. Most battles form a kind of crescendo, starting off slowly and methodically, and building in intensity and violence until you either win or lose.

Your troopers each have different skills. It's usually wise to send out scouts or infiltrators first, since they have the best chance of avoiding detection and are usually crack marksmen. In the beginning, when your squad leader's experience and accuracy are low, you're probably better off leaving him in reserve until the battle reaches its climax.

When a wounded soldier's health becomes critically low, you can use a portable medical kit and revive him so that he's almost as good as new. Just don't wait until his vital signs are critical, because the same stimulus that shocks the system into recovery can also kill a man who's too far gone. Exactly when to administer medical packs is a judgment call — one of many decisions a squad leader has to make.

One especially realistic touch is the nasty damage your squad can take from misuse of its own weapons. For example, if a marine pitches a grenade and there is not enough room for it to clear the wall he's hiding behind, the grenade will bounce back and explode in his face, probably killing him. Similarly, if a marine fires a rocket launcher and the missile hits a nearby fuel tank, he'd better be at least three squares away from the resultant blast.



Alien beasties will often attack as soon as you open the door to your base. Try not to waste grenades on them.

Breach 2 can be recommended to sci-fi fans and to conventional war gamers (if they don't mind battling wadgels along with more ordinary opponents). It's one of those games that has instant appeal to a fairly large, ready-made audience of game players, many of whom probably managed to acquire *Breach 2* months ago. With Mindcraft now distributing the product, it wouldn't be surprising to see a multitude of new *Breach* converts on the horizon.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; CGA, EGA, VGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse optional; supports sound boards.

BUDOKAN

GARY MEREDITH

The life of a warrior is not an easy one. Too often, common thieves desire to test their mettle, only to become food for crows after a swift judgment from your *odachi*, or long sword. You have been a lifelong student of *budo*, the "way of the warrior," which emphasizes the value of martial mastery in developing inner strength.

Too often lately, it seems, you are called upon to deal more in *bujutsu*, the warrior techniques, as your ancestors did in the far less peaceful years before the reign of the Tokugawa. Such are the times. But, did not old Hayashi, master of the dojo, always speak of the need for the values of the samurai when the times were most bleak?



The courtyard of Tobiko-Ryu Dojo seems quiet now, but the halls are swarming with young students aspiring to learn the way of the samurai.

Do we need the virtues of integrity, loyalty, and self-discipline any less these days? *Budokan* won't make you a master of budo, but it may just give you some insight into a philosophy born in an era many Japanese today regard as the golden age of their civilization.

In spite of the frequently rather violent nature of computer games, *Budokan* manages to evoke a rare contemplative spirit. You can play it as an excellent action game, with enough variety to satisfy anyone. But you can also take the time to study the philosophy of budo as it relates to the martial arts. Approaching the game from this angle can make it a much more rewarding experience.

As the **Electronic Arts** game begins, you are a new student in Tobiko-Ryu Dojo, one of the many schools which dot the Japanese countryside to this day. The *ryu*, or school, offers instruction in four basic disciplines of the martial arts: karate, kendo, nunchaku, and bo. Along with the physical training, there is the philosophical basis of the samurai, dispensed with an understanding of human failings by the venerable teacher, Tobiko-Sensei.

A basic tenet of budo is the concept of *ki*, the essential life force that flows around and through us all. The true master of budo is one who has learned to focus ki, so that understanding and growth might follow. Channelling ki is essential to martial success as well. When going through *kumite* (sparring), or on the mats of Budokan, the management of ki is as important as your moves.

The warrior who waits longer before attacking accumulates more ki, and the more ki accumulated, the more power his blows have. So, it's obviously wise to avoid simply wading in, flailing your weapon, and hoping you'll hit something before it hits you. Patience is rewarded.

From time to time, you have the opportunity to speak with Tobiko-Sensei, and to gain from him a greater knowledge



All other training derives from the disciplines of karate, where quickness and concentration are finely honed.

of the samurais' way. He also watches over you as you practice and spar within the various disciplines, and his critiques help you find areas in need of improvement. Listen to him and you'll be rewarded. The master is most concerned, as you might imagine, with the focusing of ki, but he's not above berating you for abusing your weapons.

Upon entering a training area, the first thing to do is familiarize yourself with the moves of your weapon via the *jiyu-renshu*, or practice, option. There are so many actions to master within each discipline that you'll probably spend a lot of time with jiyu-renshu. Each movement must become second nature, so that you can conserve and focus ki once you take on human opponents.

When you feel comfortable with each discipline, you can begin sparring with other students (either a friend or the computer) of varying abilities. In addition, there is a free-sparring mat located in the upper



The master, Tobiko-Sensei, is wise in the ways of humans, and will guide you along a path others have followed for many hundreds of years.



Kendo was developed as a training substitute for the deadly odachi, or Japanese long sword. Intensive practice sessions, called kata, provided experience for kenjitsu, the use of the sword.

left corner of the courtyard where all the students go to sharpen their skills before venturing into the Budokan. And you'll need all the sharpening you can get to do well against the 12 opponents you must face in that famous arena.

While still practicing amid the comforting confines of the Tobiko-Ryu Dojo, make sure that you work with all the combinations of weapons possible. That is, try karate against kendo, bo against nunchaku, bo against karate, and so on. This will prepare you, at least partially, for what you may face in the arena of Budokan. There, students from other schools compete with weapons, such as the *kusari-gama* (a weapon with a sickle on one end and a chain with a lead weight on the other) or the naginata (a tall shaft with a curved blade at each end), which are not taught at Tobiko-Ryu Dojo. Many of these, along with the nunchaku and the bo, are from the Okinawan schools, where weapons instruction, in addition to hand combat, flourished.

Originally, the Okinawan schools taught only karate (literally "open hand") because only the mainland samurai could carry weapons. However, they eventually expanded the curriculum to include metal and bamboo weapons. Some items, such as the shuriken, were completely rejected by the samurai and martial students alike as cowardly and worthy only of the despicable and dishonorable ninja.

Budokan's interface is very smooth and helps to create an effective illusion of martial combat. While you may play with either the keyboard or the joystick, you'll probably find that the joystick is easier. Because some of the moves are rather complex, there's a danger of tying your fingers in knots if you're using the keyboard. Something that may or may not be a problem is a bit of a lag when using the joystick. This, however, varies according to the make of the joystick, so if you've got a good quality stick you shouldn't have a problem.

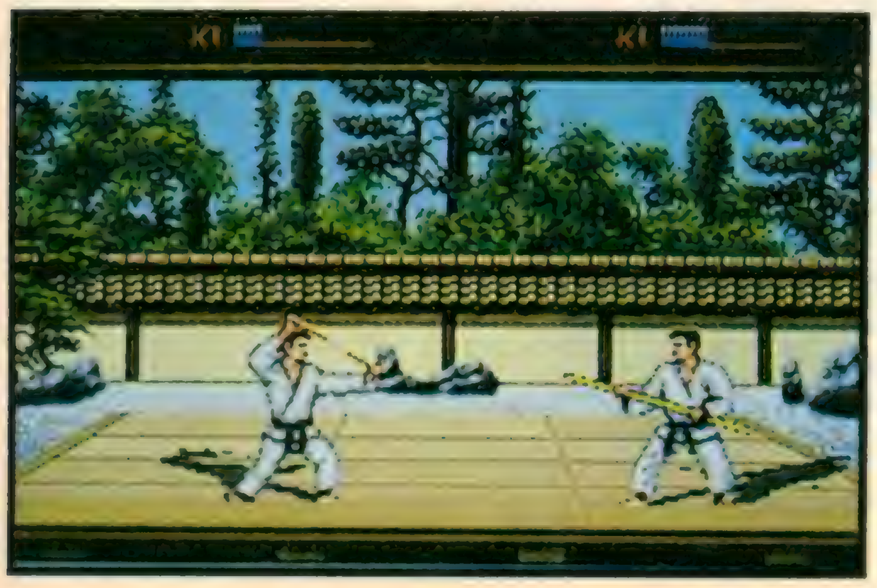
You'll also want to have VGA graphics and a fairly fast computer to get the most out of *Budokan*. While the game is enjoyable in EGA, and even acceptable in CGA or Hercules graphics, it truly comes alive with 256 colors and a fast processor. The delicate shading lends an atmosphere of rice paper and bamboo to the entire game.

If there is such a thing as a gentle martial arts game, *Budokan* is it. While other games may feature battles (or, worse yet, simple gratuitous violence), *Budokan* maintains the approach to martial arts as they've been taught in Japan for hundreds of years. Once relative peace fell on Japan, the teachers of budo came to see martial studies as a way of mastering yourself in the face of all the external world might throw at you. So, young one, you've made the decision to enter the training hall, and you've spoken to the master of your desire to become a true samurai. All that's left to say is *hajimae* — begin.

GP



The dream of every Japanese martial arts student is the opportunity to prove himself against the toughest competition from other schools in the Budokan.



The sparring mat is a less formal way of increasing your experience in anticipation of your eventual appearance before the crowds of the Budokan.

Hardware requirements: 384K minimum memory (512K for VGA or MCGA graphics); VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick optional; supports sound boards.

CIRCUIT'S

GARY MEREDITH



Whenever you need information, Chiriga's bar is the place to go. The dancers are entertaining, the drinks are cheap, and anyone you might want to see is likely to show up during the evening.

Life in the Budayeen is, to say the least, interesting. When the fragments of the old world order coalesced under the mantle of Islam, it was understood by imam and caliph alike that certain... shall we say, *vices*, must be tolerated in some small way. Thus the Budayeen is an oasis (or quagmire, depending on your point of view) in the sands of Islam where almost anything is possible — for the right price.

Circuit's Edge from **Infocom** paints an intriguing portrait of one possible future, in which technological progress is at extreme odds with ultra-conservative religious philosophy. The story, written by science fiction author George Alec Effinger, follows the adventures of Marîd Audran. Marîd, once a child of the streets, has become an operative of the powerful Friedlander Bey, or Papa, as he is known in the Budayeen. A popular saying goes, "Papa doesn't just have connections; he *is* connections." So when Bey talks, *everyone* listens.



Your place looks pretty bleak, but by Budayeen standards, it's quite palatial. Besides, you're out on the streets or in the bars most of the time.

Those listeners include Marîd, who has been given the task of avenging the death of one of Papa's associates. Of course, in the Budayeen, nothing is ever simple. As Marîd goes about his investigation, he becomes involved in other interrelated investigations and, eventually, things become so intertwined that you're not sure of the time, let alone the progress of the case.

Along the way, you must also attend to normal human functions: eating, sleeping, and staying out of dark alleys as much as possible. The latter is no easy chore, since the Budayeen at night (when you do most of your work) often seems like one big dark alley. But since nearly all the places where your contacts hang out are closed during the day, you'll have to get busy when the sun goes down. Be careful—if you don't budget your time, you may find that you've painted yourself into a corner.

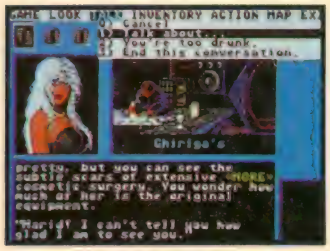
The task of rescuing a kidnapped boy named Abdul-Hassan is a case in point. If you spend too much time looking for the old jeweler's missing sapphire, or collecting money owed to Guido, you'll miss the kidnappers' midnight deadline. And if Abdul-Hassan dies, you might as well go ahead and pack your suitcase. Papa will disown you, and you'll be a pariah throughout the Budayeen. Just be glad they don't relieve you of some important body part in the tradition of Islamic justice.



If you think Bill looks like he's seen it all, you're almost right. Actually, with the aid of various chemicals, he has *seen it all — and then some. But he'll always take you wherever you want to go.*

Take notes on everyone you meet and everything you see. The game has a handy recall feature with which you can play back past conversations, but it won't catch all the details of an encounter. Small hints, such as the odor of a particular cologne or a face briefly glimpsed, really do make the difference between solving all the puzzles and being thrown out of the Budayeen by an extremely displeased Papa.

Nearly all the inhabitants of the Budayeen are "chipped-in" to varying extents, and Marîd is no exception. Computer chips, called *moddies*, are plugged into receptacles surgically implanted into the head of the user. These moddies — and the subordinate chips, called daddies — modify the behavior and abilities of the user. For example, Marîd owns a moddy that controls his hypothalamic functions, so that he can, in an emergency, suppress the effects of fatigue, hunger, or pain.



Girls like Arissa usually busy themselves by getting customers to buy them drinks or spend a few minutes with them in hotels. But the "entertainers" can give you valuable info if you ask them correctly.

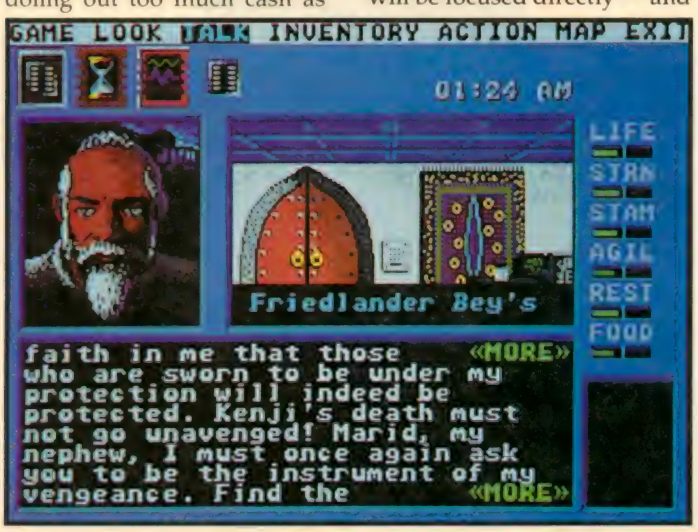
You can buy other chips at either Laila's Mod Shop or from one of the many street dealers. They can allow you to understand other languages, become a computer hacker, possess superhuman strength, or dazzle would-be muggers with martial arts abilities. There's a big trade in the Budayeen for these chips, and the wise purchase and use of moddies is another key to success in *Circuit's Edge*.

Money management is critical as well. The monetary unit of the Budayeen is the *kiam*, and you're staked to several hundred when the game begins. You go through these pretty quickly, however. Food and moddies don't come cheaply, and you'll find that doling out too much cash as *baksheesh* puts a strain on your finances.

"Baksheesh" is an Arabic term that means more than a tip or a gratuity, but not quite a bribe. At least the Arabic perception of baksheesh lacks the stigma of an out-and-out bribe. It's a fine point, certainly, but there's no denying that baksheesh, prudently used, is an effective means of getting information from people and access to places that might otherwise be off-limits.

There are, fortunately, a number of ways to acquire more kiams. You meet some people who offer employment — and the jobs pay well. Or you can try your luck at roulette or baccarat down at the Gambling Den on Third Street. Be forewarned, though, that the odds definitely favor the house, particularly once you've won a few kiams. Knowing when to walk away from the gaming tables is an art to be developed in *Circuit's Edge*.

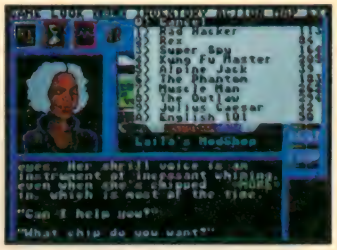
If you're really desperate, you can always resort to armed robbery. The downside here is that you usually end up killing your victim, and the attention of the Budayeen police force will be focused directly — and aggressively — on you. These guys carry out the letter of the law, not because they're upstanding citizens, but because they really savor the opportunity to beat the hell out of someone.



Friedlander Bey is the real power in the Budayeen and beyond. If he's on your side, you have carte blanche throughout the enclave, including with the police. But when he wants something done, you'd better do it — and quickly.

Those familiar with Effinger's work will be interested to note that *Circuit's Edge* takes place between the novels *When Gravity Fails* and *A Fire in the Sun*. It's a tribute to both the author and the game designers that the flavor of these novels has been transferred so successfully to the more-limited medium of a computer game.

Before getting involved in a game session, you should know that the text parser is not the most accessible you're likely to find. Unless you word a question or phrase exactly like it wants, you'll probably get an "I don't know" or some other useless response. And, oddly enough, when you ask questions outside the boundaries of your investigation, you get some reference to restaurants. Go figure.



For all the latest in moddies, Laila's is the place to go. You'll find, however, that the one chip you desperately need has already been sold. You can earn it, though, if you offer a helping hand to one of the local merchants.

You should also be aware that this game is designed for adults. The denizens of the Budayeen are an eclectic mix of prostitutes, drug dealers, addicts, and con men. Some of the prostitutes' replies in particular could be considered suggestive — though they can't be considered more than that.

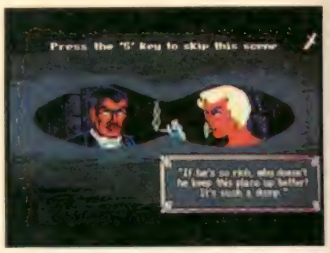
Circuit's Edge travels much the same territory as *Neuromancer*, but with better graphics and a much easier gameplay interface. Let's hope that the trend of close involvement of science fiction authors in game design continues. *Circuit's Edge* is a wonderful example of what can be done when designers add authors in the loop.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse optional; supports sound boards; 5 1/4" drive and second floppy or hard drive required.

THE COLONEL'S

LESLIE MIZELL



By entering one of the four secret passageways in the house, you can eavesdrop on conversations or keep an eye on the occupants of the house.

It was a dark and stormy night.

Lightning flashes in the distance. A full moon glitters from behind ominous clouds. The storm moves ever closer to the dilapidated mansion where an odd assortment of characters has gathered to hear the colonel's announcement.

Before the night is over, all but four of them will be dead.

The Colonel's Bequest is a new mystery from **Sierra**, the leader in interactive adventures. But while the game is long on mood, it's short on substance. It's a throwback for designer Roberta Williams, who developed a game called *Mystery House* years before starting her popular *King's Quest* series. But if Laura Bow, the heroine of *The Colonel's Bequest*, is to become the heroine of a series, Ms. Williams needs to brush up on her Agatha Christie and Arthur Conan Doyle. It takes more than secret panels and planted clues to keep mystery fans happy.



They say Colonel Dijon has been confined to a wheelchair for years. But with a pretty (and willing) maid like Fifi, the hours must pass quickly.

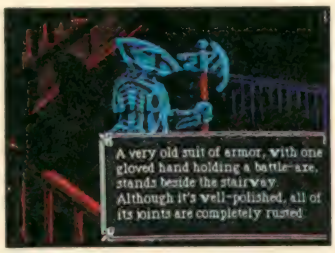
Certainly, the ingredients of a great mystery are all here. The time is 1927, the height of the Roaring Twenties, when men are men and women like them that way. Laura Bow, a college journalist, is invited by her roommate, Lillian, to spend the weekend at her uncle's plantation. When they arrive, Laura finds that the run-down plantation is buried in the swamps of Louisiana. The gathering of friends and relatives is completely cut off from the outside world.

And what a peculiar gathering it is. Besides Lillian's uncle, Colonel Henri Dijon — an invalid confined to a wheelchair — there's Rudy, the greedy nephew with an eye on inheriting a fortune; Gloria, the "actress" who is having an affair with at least two men in the group; Ethel, Lillian's alcoholic mother; Clarence Sparrow, the crooked lawyer with a bad gambling habit; Wilbur C. Feels, the family doctor who knows secrets about members of the Dijon family; Gertie, the snob who looks down on other members of the family; and Lillian, who now seems much more highly strung than she did on campus.

The household servants are no less unusual. Jeeves, the butler, is in a position to know everyone's business. The French maid, Fifi, seems to be on, umm, "intimate" terms with several men in the household. And Celie, the cook, is said to dabble in voodoo.

It's no wonder the colonel's announcement is such a bombshell. Before dessert has been served, he tells the family and friends who are down for the weekend that they — with the exception of Laura, of course — will split his inheritance evenly. But if any of them die before the colonel, the money will be divided among the survivors.

And as the night progresses, it becomes obvious that *someone* isn't willing to share.



Suits of armor aren't in old, dark houses just for show. You can bet that there's at least one secret hiding behind this rusty guy's chain mail.



It looks like poor Gloria has been strangled. Was Clarence that upset when she threw him over? Or was it someone else?

BEQUEST



The two mysteries — solving the murders and finding the Civil War treasure — start to come together when you uncover this secret passageway in the hedge garden.

Williams has set the game up to resemble those old dark house mystery plays such as *The Cat and the Canary* and *Ten Little Indians*. You get an odd assortment of people together, cut them off from the outside world on an island or by a storm, provide a motive for murder, and then sit back and watch what happens.

One prerequisite for an old dark house mystery is a house with secret passageways. There are four of them readily available in *The Colonel's Bequest*, and another you'll find near the end of the game. Subtly placed clues range from a monogrammed handkerchief to a cigar butt. And *everyone* has a secret, as well as a motive for wanting the colonel dead. So far, so good.

But one of the major differences between this game and other Sierra adventures lies in its scope. In most Sierra games, you're exploring a new land (or lands). Each item you obtain is a key that unlocks a different area of the game. You rarely need to trek over area you've already covered, whether it's a forest, a planet, or a police station.

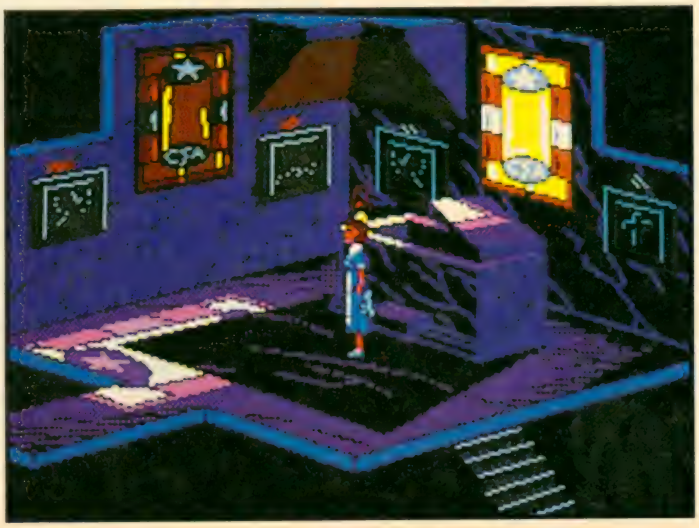
But in *The Colonel's Bequest*, you're confined to the plantation and its grounds. So each act (in keeping with its stage atmosphere, the game is divided into eight acts, signifying the hours between seven p.m. and three a.m.) simply consists of searching every room of the plantation, the four secret panels, and the outbuildings. Over and over.

And you never know if you're making progress because *The Colonel's Bequest* lacks the point scoring method found in most Sierra games. You have four things to accomplish in each act, and the only way you know when you've stumbled across something, somebody, or somebody you're supposed to is the clock that appears on the screen, its hands moving a quarter hour closer to striking the hour, when a new act will begin.

As Laura, you move through the game as a regular buttinsky, questioning everyone you meet, searching through all the rooms, never reporting any of the bodies you discover — even pumping information out of the Dijons' pet parrot. The suspects are all vile, which can only be expected, but Laura herself is none too likable. One of the things *The Colonel's Bequest* is missing is that mysterious stranger who arrives in the midst of the trouble and becomes the love interest, the primary suspect, or both. This game could really use, say, a policeman or detective to liven up the action and add some authority to Laura's snooping.

But though it has some fairly major faults, *The Colonel's Bequest* isn't a bad game, especially for novice players. There are lots of bodies to discover, several ways for Laura to die that provide some masochistic amusement, a couple of red herrings, and even a Civil War treasure subplot to keep you interested after you've figured out the identity of the murderer(s). Which won't be *too* far into the game play. So all in all, *The Colonel's Bequest* is OK entertainment. It's just all too elementary, my dear Watson.

GP



Locked in the cradle of the deep! But a few old Rebel bones aren't going to deter the likes of Laura Bow: College Journalist. Not when there's a treasure to uncover and a murderer to unmask.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick and mouse optional; supports sound boards.

COMMAND H.Q.

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Command H.Q. is one of those war games you can play when you're too fuzzed-out to wrestle with anything fancy, when you want to turn a novice on to computer war-gaming without overload, or when you just don't have the time for a six-hour-long campaign. It falls squarely in the time-honored beer-and-pretzels tradition of Risk, although it is, to be sure, a much more sophisticated game.

Designed by veteran game programmer Dan Bunten (*M.U.L.E.* and *Seven Cities of Gold*), *Command H.Q.* from **MicroPlay** is a game of global grand strategy in which campaigns are waged in real time, not in game turns. You can set the speed at fast, slow, or any one of several degrees of medium, but the inexorable pressure of time and of enemy movement — real or potential — adds considerable zest to the goings-on, as well as an element of welcome realism. You simply don't have all the time you want in which to make your decisions, any more than a real commander would. The situation is always fluid, and if you don't devote some of your resources to intelligence-gathering, you're likely to have some nasty surprises.



The World War II scenario starts at the end of 1942, when the early Axis gains had not yet been offset by Allied production. It's an interesting and fairly even game.

Air, sea, and ground units are represented by stylized icons. Each icon has a red bar running under its base which shows at a glance if the unit is at full strength, and if not, how much it has been weakened through casualties or attrition. Infantry units which are not on the move also display a green bar to show when they have become "entrenched" (and infantry units entrenched in a city can really grind up attacking forces, just as in real life). Long-distance movement over rough terrain causes attrition. Weakened units must rest awhile in cities, bases, or oil fields in order to recover their full combat efficiency (a chore the computer takes care of automatically).

Air units are terrifically expensive, but extremely powerful on both offense and defense. If you plan an offensive strategy, carrier groups are the mightiest way to project power (make sure they're adequately escorted by surface units, however). If your concerns are primarily defensive, you'll find that submarines are definitely cost-effective.

Of the five game scenarios — 1918, 1942, 1986, 2023, and ???? — 1918 is probably the one you should try first. It's the easiest because it uses only infantry, subs, and surface fleets. Later scenarios add other weapons capabilities: air power; carrier groups; spy satellites, which can be placed into any desired orbit in order to reveal the enemy's movements (ridiculously expensive, but well worth it); and killer satellites, which can be sent aloft to blind your opponent.

If you're being overwhelmed (a distinct possibility during the World War III campaigns), you can elect to go nuclear. This will devastate the enemy hordes, but it also creates a vast radioactive wasteland through which your armies cannot even march without suffering suicidal attrition rates.

The game has a sound and rather subtle economic base. Each side starts off with resources that are roughly even, and new units must be purchased with hard cash at each turn. Conversely, cities generate a certain amount of money each turn — which gives you good reason to conquer them. But because of air raids, damaged port facilities, overcrowding, and so on, you can't always place your new units



Deploy your satellites on this screen, putting them into orbit where you need them most. Their information on enemy movements can spell the difference between victory and defeat.

where you want them to be, or locate them at a time when you need them the most; thus, timing and placement of reinforcements also becomes part of one's overall strategy.

Oil is as vital to the armies of *Command H.Q.* as it is to real armies. A graph at the bottom left of the screen shows you how much oil you need to sustain your present level of activity, how much you're getting from wells you control, and how much you have in your reserves. A full reserve will sustain your operations for a while, but as soon as that runs low, your ability to wage war starts to contract, slowly but steadily.

The 1986 scenario lets you fight a classic NATO/Warsaw Pact conflict, using satellites, diplomacy, and, if you wish, nuclear weapons. A bit wilder and less predictable is the 2023 scenario, which posits a World War IV situation in which the computer merrily scrambles alliances and randomly scatters resources all over the globe. You may find yourself commanding an unlikely alliance of Australia, China, Mexico, and South Africa, with most of the oil fields in India and Alaska....

In the very *Empire*-like "????" scenario, you start out with a single powerful city-state and conduct global expansion until you run head-on into a rival warlord whose resources and forces are hidden from you until he commits them to battle.



Air strikes can be flown against any target inside this radius. Transfer of air units and troop air lifts, however, have much greater — almost hemispheric — range.



You can see all the territory under control of one side or the other by pressing F7. The white areas are neutral and are up for grabs.

One novel feature in *Command H.Q.* is the replay option, which allows you to play back and observe a complete "filmed" record of the war. If you fought a particularly brilliant campaign, and wish to gloat over it repeatedly, you can even save these war movies. If you want a second chance, or if you get a brilliant notion while watching a replay and want to try it out, you can select the Film-to-Game option and jump right in to take command at any desired point.

Getting started in *Command H.Q.* is easy, thanks to a streamlined interface, excellent documentation, and a couple of exceedingly helpful tutorials. It won't take you long to move on to the more complex scenarios. There are several levels of difficulty, based mainly on the opponent's degree of ferocity and aggressiveness, and provisions are included for paradrops, strategic bombing, amphibious landings, and offshore bombardment. The graphics don't dazzle, but they pull the plow adequately.

Most games of *Command H.Q.* take 90 minutes or less to play from start to finish — just perfect for those little slots of game-playing time when you don't feel like saving something unfinished. Although the emphasis in this game is on ease and simplicity of play, it incorporates some pleasingly subtle features, and the real-time aspect of play generates considerable excitement.

Most of all, *Command H.Q.* is a lot of fun. It may not be the biggest or deepest war game on the market, but you can finish it at one sitting and still come away with a first-rate gaming experience.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional, mouse recommended.

CONTINUUM

GARY MEREDITH



The route to the door out of this room looks fairly straightforward. You can gain extra time by getting out quickly, but don't forget to grab the cube floating just in front of and above the exit.

Has a computer game ever given you an attack of acrophobia? Probably never, right? After all, even with the best Super VGA graphics, nobody with a fear of heights is going to experience the terror of real acrophobia just by playing a PC game. But who knows? The next generation of software may have to carry warning labels.

While realistic rendering of form, shading, and color has been achieved successfully in a number of games, even these efforts fall short of giving a sense of depth and perspective to a flat computer screen. *Continuum* won't win any awards for mimicking real-world forms, but the three-dimensional world so wonderfully created by the game's design team will knock you for a loop.

Continuum probably offers more "oh, wows" per byte than any game in the past year. The sense of actually being within a computer world has never been stronger. The graphics are almost painfully simple, but what **Data East** has managed to do with them is anything *but* simple. You start in one of more than 250 rooms, controlling a craft called a mobile. It can't actually fly, but it can bounce quite well. By using the floating platforms, you pogo your way across to the doorway and then to the next room. It sounds pretty easy, but you'll probably think otherwise about 30 seconds into the game.

The key to success in the game is in finding the right viewpoint from which to play. One of the marvelous things about *Continuum* is the ability to vary your viewpoint, much in the way you would using a camcorder or movie camera. The viewing angle is infinitely variable, from almost directly under your mobile (the floor becomes transparent once you go below its level) to directly above. A very high viewing angle is best in most cases, since it allows you to see not only your mobile, but its shadow as well. If you can see your shadow on a target platform,



The name of this room may be Welcome, but you probably won't feel that way once time begins to run out. Remember that the easiest route may not always be the best one.



After some experimenting, you'll probably discover that this view from about 30° above your mobile allows you a good view of the room in front of you as well as a view of your mobile's shadow.

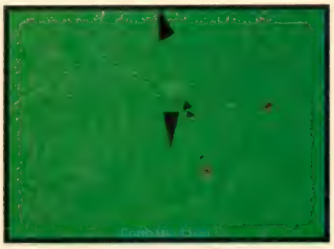
then you can be assured that the mobile will hit the platform. If you really want to drive yourself crazy, you can try the game with the viewpoint from inside the mobile. It's almost impossible to play this way, but the perspective is stunning.

If you choose to play in the action mode, you'll have a limited time to get through each room. You can pick up bonus time for quickly negotiating a room, and there are certain items you can acquire that will also increase your time limit. Of course, in the action mode, you're not just there to see the sights. You must find and grab 16 crystals and 16 keys scattered among the 250 rooms inside to complete the game. Some of the objects are quite accessible, but others are shielded by implacable guard cubes that you must maneuver around to gain your prize.

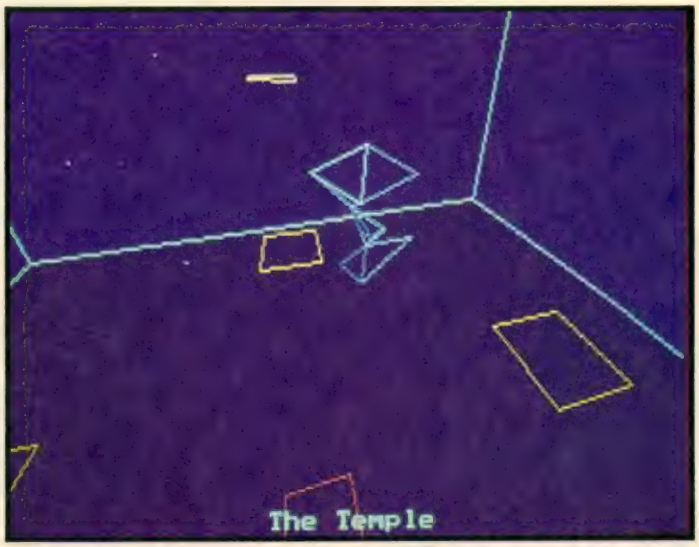
For those taken by the game's sense of depth, there's the emotion mode. Although there's no time limit here, that's not to say there's no frustration. Some of these rooms are diabolically difficult. Fortunately, there's a Memorize feature that lets you save your last position, so you won't have to start at the beginning should you meet with a sudden disaster. Obstacles include the aforementioned guard cubes, as well as force fields, energy drains, and various surreal critters whose only purpose is to make life as difficult as possible for you.

Continuum is just plain fun—I don't know how I can say it any better. It's not often that you come across a game so enjoyable to play that you don't care whether you win or lose. Even *Tetris*, addictive as it is, retains enough potential for frustration to drive one to desperate acts. In *Continuum*, though, you win even when you don't win. You just bounce through a strange new world, enjoying the scenery as you go.

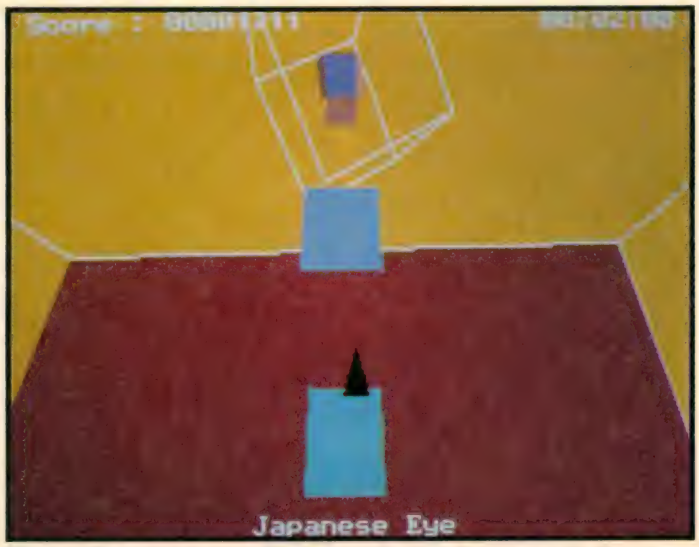
GP



One of the best features of Continuum *is the ability to radically change the viewing angle. This view from underneath the mobile is useful when you're having trouble locating doors and other objects at higher levels.*



The color schemes of some rooms may make it difficult for you to pick out certain platforms. If you do have problems, you can change the filled-polygon images to wire-forms.



If you really want to give your brain a couple of good twists, use the first-person perspective from within the mobile. It won't take long to realize that playing from this perspective could easily lead to insanity.

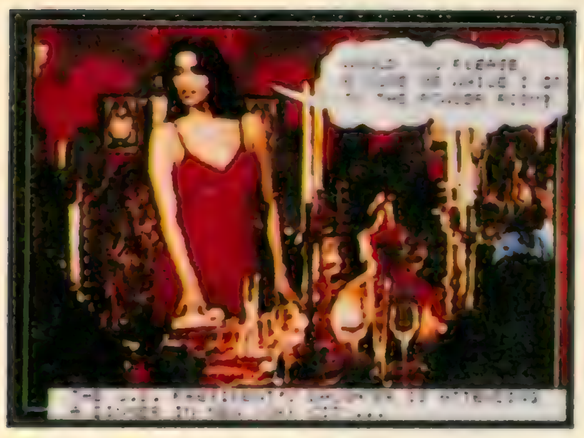
Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; 10 Mhz or faster machine recommended; VGA, EGA, CGA, Hercules, and Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional; AdLib, Sound-Blaster, and Tandy 3-voice sound supported.

CRIME WAVE

GARY MEREDITH

Back when you were on the force, you always got the toughest assignments. Then a crime boss killed your wife, and you left the police force to strike out on your own. Now Lucas McCabe Investigations can pick and choose cases, but you *still* seem to get the really tough ones.

When Brittany Cole, the free-spirited daughter of the president, is kidnapped, you knew you were the only man for the job. The trouble is, the man who engineered the kidnapping — the nefarious and mysterious King Pin — knows it, too. Now every lowlife in his employ is out to get you before you can get to Brittany.



It's no wonder Brittany's father, the president, loses sleep at night over his daughter's antics. And what happened to all those turtleneck sweaters he bought her?

Crime Wave, with its digitized graphics and its use of **Access'** RealSound system, superficially resembles the earlier *Mean Streets*. Make no mistake, though. While *Mean Streets* was a role-playing adventure with a few arcade sequences, *Crime Wave* is an arcade game with some dazzling embellishments.

The arcade sequences are tied together by impressive digitized images, some with animation. Though these scenes will never be mistaken for full motion video, they are, nonetheless, fascinating. The real game, however, is in the arcade sequences, and these are just as impressive in their own way. The action, with a 286 computer, is quite smooth and realistic. In fact, for some, there may be a bit too much realism.

In most arcade games, when you kill an enemy, he just disappears. Not so with *Crime Wave*. When you nail someone — especially if you're using some of the heavier artillery you have at your disposal — he explodes with fiery hands, arms, legs, and even a head, flying in all directions. This has to be the most graphically violent game to date and may be shocking to anyone used to the rather sterilized violence portrayed in most computer games.



Here's one way to remedy problems at the train station. With all these bullets flying, is it any wonder most people take their chances with the airlines?



There's an all-points bulletin out for Brittany's kidnappers, but we all know there's only one man for the job. But, Luke, please — get a new pair of shades.

Something else that many players may find distressing is the rather suggestive nature of the storyline graphics. To say that some of the scenes with Brittany are titillating would be an understatement. After all, the woman is manhandled, bound, threatened with a gun, and generally shown in submissive scenes, all the while wearing a little red number that scarcely conceals her attributes. *Crime Wave* is billed as an adult game, but the scenes are not only too suggestive for some, but also demeaning to women. While *Mean Streets* featured some good-natured sexiness, *Crime Wave* goes a bit further.



If you find yourself getting low on ammo, energy, or lives, it might pay for you to blast a few barrels or crates and pick up whatever you find inside.

As an arcade game, however, *Crime Wave* is great. The game play is straightforward and smooth, even though it is strictly keyboard-based, without mouse or joystick support. You can reconfigure the keyboard to suit your taste, though most will find the default setting acceptable. The

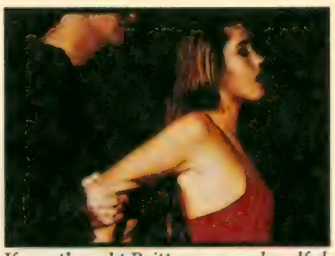
only possible objection is the use of a two-key combination for firing your small weapon and for jumping.

There are three different levels of play, though most will want to select the easy level to begin with, since even at that level the bullets and shuriken will really be flying. Unfortunately, there is no save feature, so you'll probably spend a lot of time going over the same territory the first few times you play. It pays to note the locations of extra lives or caches of ammo and energy on your first trip through to make your life a little easier the next time.

Since the object of the game is to rescue Brittany and confront the King Pin, most of your time will be spent accumulating the firepower, energy, and lives you'll need for the final scenario. Fortunately, you're given adequate opportunity to stockpile everything you'll need.

The warehouse bonus rooms are especially full of goodies, so you'll want to try every door you find inside. These rooms contain laser beam sequencers or kinetic death pads, which are deadly but solvable security systems for you to breach. Every one has a discernible pattern, so if you just watch for awhile, you should be able to deduce a way past the beams and pads.

You'll also want to pick up all the money and drugs you find lying around. They'll add to your score, and they'll keep the bad guys from using them to finance their master plan. Extra lives are awarded for a certain total score (it varies depending on the stage). So the more people you kill, the more lives you get. And you're going to need all those lives if you're to survive what's waiting for you at the King Pin's place.



If you thought Brittany was a handful for her father, just wait until you see how much trouble she causes her kidnappers.

Another way of acquiring energy, ammo, and lives is to blast away at any barrels, boxes, or other containers you may see in a scene. These objects nearly always conceal something useful.

In many scenes, there are either henchmen or machines shooting at you from seemingly impregnable positions. But you can attack them successfully with a jump and a well-timed blast. As far as general maneuvering through the hail of gunfire goes, it's probably best — if a bit ridiculous-looking — if you go through life crouched. You can still fire on your enemies, but you're a smaller target for them.

Look out for the guys firing from the high positions, as well as the ninjas, whose shuriken seem to have minds of their own, and rarely fly in straight, predictable paths. These shuriken, in fact, have a homing capability, but it can be overcome by using the boxes, barrels, or posts in a scene to block them.

Crime Wave is a gorgeous game to look at and play, especially if you have a relatively fast computer and VGA capability. While the graphics are certainly acceptable in EGA, the game play with anything slower than a 286 computer is not. Even with reduced resolution, the action is just too choppy for even a fast XT.

On the other hand, depending on your computer's speaker, you can expect to get reasonably good sound without an add-on sound board, thanks to RealSound. While the sound production won't be mistaken for a CD player, it is several cuts above the usual garbage that emanates from PC speakers.

Those expecting another *Mean Streets* will be disappointed, but if they'll take *Crime Wave* for what it is — a giant leap in the realm of computer arcade games — their disappointment won't last long. It may be a little too suggestive for some, but there's no denying that it's also very exciting to play.

GP



What a treat! You've been cordially invited to a quaint little garden party at the estate of the King Pin. Firearms are optional, but probably essential given the ugly turn this party seems to have taken.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; hard drive required.

DEATH KNIGHTS OF

NEIL RANDALL

Last year's *Champions of Krynn* was the first game in SSI's Advanced Dungeons & Dragons (AD&D) series to be set in the popular fictional world of Dragonlance. Because of its setting, *Champions* was somewhat different from other AD&D games, particularly in the various character races and classes available. *Champions* was different in one other respect as well. It offered a stronger and more coherent plot line, which resulted in a game that players could complete in a shorter time than usual for AD&D games.

Obviously, the game was popular, because less than a year later we have a sequel. *Death Knights of Krynn* (*DKK*) picks up the story where *Champions* left off. In fact, *DKK* lets you import your saved *Champions* characters, complete with most of their belongings. It's a true sequel, not just the next step in a series of games with a similar theme.



A formidable lineup awaits you in battle. The huge Zombie Giants are tough, but the Skel Warriors are even tougher — and they're everywhere.

Character races are the same as those in *Champions*: Hill dwarfs and mountain dwarfs are well-suited as fighters, paladins, thieves, clerics, and others; Silvanesti (high) elves attack well with long swords, short swords, and bows, and make excellent mages or mixed classes; Qualinestri elves are similar to the Silvanesti, but get along better with other races; Kinder are little folk, resistant to magic and capable of taunting opponents into a rage; and humans are strong, and capable of becoming knights.

Character classes, too, are identical to those in *Champions*, and mixed classes are encouraged. Clerics and mages are the primary magic-users, the difference being that mages must scribe spells into spell books while clerics need no such books. Clerics align themselves with a particular deity, who grants them special abilities. Mages must pay attention to the phases of the three moons in order to make the most of their magic.

Fighters, paladins, and rangers all have particular strengths. Fighters are obviously the best at combat, but they can never learn spells and are susceptible to magic. Paladins can eventually (past the eighth level) learn some cleric spells, and they can heal damage. Rangers can gain druidic spells once past the seventh level, and mage spells past the eighth. They're very effective against giant creatures.

Solamnic knights are the soul of the game. They can belong to one of three orders: the Crown, the Sword, and the Rose. Knights of the Rose are the most prestigious, but they pay performance penalties for the honor. The Krynn stories are all about these superknights and their special quests — in fact, you can complete neither *Champions* nor *DKK* without one in the party.

If you saved your characters at the conclusion of *Champions*, you can use them in *DKK* without alterations. If not, the game provides a ready-made party with all the necessary components.

You begin the adventure in the Gargath Outpost. The first character you meet is Sir Karl (from *Champions*), who descends upon you in undead form and lets you know why you'll want to get involved. Immediately afterwards, you'll find yourself in combat. As with all other AD&D offerings, combat is central, and here you're forced to fight before you can even think about doing something else. If you object to the amount of time spent in combat in AD&D games, you won't be happy with *DKK*. On the other hand, this is as good a combat system as you'll find anywhere.

In combat, you can control



A door beckons you inside. But be on guard — there's no telling what lies behind it.

KRYNN



You're offered an elixir to end your nightmares. It sounds good, but can you trust it?

each character. You can also choose to control just some of them and let the computer take command of the rest. Since magic-users will not cast spells under computer control (they use any missile weapon on hand instead), you should control your spell-casters at all times. You can expect a difficult time defeating many of the monsters you'll face, especially some enemy mages and clerics capable of wiping out your entire party, so it's highly advisable to maintain strict control of your party during the battle. You should gang up on enemy spell-casters first, then whittle down the opposition by concentrating on one or two enemies at a time. If the computer handles the combat, it will assign one member of your party to each enemy, and the result is a long, painful, and potentially disastrous encounter.

There are 11 locations to visit and rid of enemies. In them, you'll encounter all sorts of creatures, whose seeming purpose in life is to hang around in bunches and do away with guests. In addition, traveling between locations (by means of the colorful overhead map) means encountering other bands of enemies. Fortunately, encounters in *DKK* are less frequent than in *Champions* or other AD&D games, probably because battles are deadlier than ever. And you won't have the problem of running into endless bands of, say, sewer rats; the game, to its immense credit, only forces you to fight creatures whose defeat really means something.

The overriding theme of *DKK* is the undead. Almost every creature you encounter will either be an undead or be accompanied by an undead. You'll find yourself in battle with zombie giants, zombie mastodons, and zombie minotaurs. Also arrayed against you will be spectral minions, vampires, vodyanoi (which live in water), wights, wraiths, and squidlike wyndlasses. Sivik draconians are tough, magic-resistant, and plentiful. Skeletal giants and skeletal warriors are scattered all over, and the latter are immune to a cleric's ability to repel the undead. Undead orcs, dread wolves, wereboars and weretigers, hellhounds, and undead beasts also abound.

Then there are the dragons. Apart from the undead dragon (which fortunately has no intelligence), *DKK* offers combat against spectral dragons, death dragons, and red, blue, and black dragons. These creatures are deadly, with the ability to breathe fire and lightning bolts, so all heroes who face them must select their attacks wisely. Unfortunately, dragons seem to appear only after the party has already worn itself down (i.e., after a lengthy pursuit), so they're practically invincible. Still, with well-aimed attacks and intelligent conservation of magic spells, they can be defeated.



The area display is extremely helpful for finding your way around. At right, the highlighted names show which characters are ready to advance a level.

Like *Champions*, *DKK* carries a continous, controlled plot line which, in effect, forces you from one location to the next. But the plot manages to maintain your interest by heightening suspense. For dedicated players of the Might and Magic, Ultima, or Wizardry series, *DKK* will, like *Champions*, prove to be too short a game. But for all AD&D followers, *DKK* succeeds very well. It doesn't change the basic Krynn system, but it does add a fascinating chapter to the story.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; supports AdLib and SoundBlaster sound boards; supports mouse and joystick.

DRAGON LORD

GARY MEREDITH

As a Dragonmaster, you're not out to win any awards for popularity. After all, you and your two ambitious counterparts have kept the region of Anrea around Dwarf Mountain in a constant state of chaos these many years. Raiding other villages and taxing your people to finance those raids haven't exactly made you a saint in anyone's mind. Now, the Great Lords have offered immortality to the Dragonmaster who can find and reassemble the pieces of the Magic Talisman. With that sort of prize in your sights, you'll expend all of your resources, and then some, to win. Those sniveling, whining, loutish subjects of yours will end up looking back on their existence up to now as a true golden age.

In *Dragon Lord*, from **Cinemaware**, you become one of the three Dragonmasters — Bachim the Alchemist, Oureod the She-Vampire, or Ametrin the Green Beast (sounds like a lovable trio, doesn't it?). The remaining two Dragonmasters can be played by one or two human players or by the computer. As a Dragonmaster, you're mainly concerned with breeding dragons and then using them to conquer other villages. And, of course, you must hunt for the pieces of the Magic Talisman.

You start out with one dragon, but you'll need quite a few more before you can hope to succeed. It seems that in their infinite wisdom, the so-called Great Lords made the pieces of the Magic Talisman invisible to all but dragon eyes. On top of that, once a piece of the Talisman has been found, a dragon must be left to guard it. So, you'll need a minimum of three dragons. In fact, after attrition from the various battles, you'll probably need considerably more than three. That's where the incubation room comes in.

Each Dragonmaster is allotted 20 dragon eggs, which must be incubated and hatched (although one look at these eggs and the possibility of a world-record omelet might cross your mind). Since you're going against two ruthless and ambitious opponents who'll be certain to hatch as many dragons as they can, your first duty should be to fill up all four spaces in the incubation room. Here, you can determine how strong and how skilled a particular dragon will be.

It usually takes several months to hatch an egg, but you can speed up the process by increasing the heat. There is a downside to this tactic, however. First, extra heat costs extra money, and you're not exactly rolling in cash at the start of the game. More importantly, a dragon that's undergone an express incubation will be considerably weaker than one of its brethren brought to term normally. It's best to fortify the one dragon you have so that you can begin collecting taxes from vanquished villages while your eggs slowly incubate.



Here are three faces even a mother would have trouble loving. Since every Dragonmaster starts out with the same resources, it really doesn't matter which character you choose.

You can influence the dragon's abilities by casting various spells while it's still in the egg. Spells for size, strength, speed, mental power, and resistance are available and should be used in combination to produce a well-rounded dragon. You can also cast spells on your dragons after they've hatched from their eggs. For example, you'll probably want at least one dragon with much better than average eyesight,



The humidity is so high in the incubation room that you almost feel as though you're drinking the air rather than breathing it. It's a good environment, however, for hatching dragon eggs.

should the search for the Talisman come down to scouring the open countryside (you can't assume that the pieces of the Talisman will always be conveniently located in a town or village). Just remember to note the side effects of a spell. In this case, better eyesight also means a drowsy dragon.

Once a dragon is hatched, it must be named before it can be sent out on a mission. You can send the dragon out alone by simply setting its zeal level. If you're feeling a bit jaded, however, you might want to go with it on a training mission and direct the attack yourself. This offers a nice view as you sit on your dragon's back, watching as he rakes an unfortunate village below with his fiery breath. It's not the most effective way to subdue a village, though. You're just not likely to be as skilled at attack as your dragon unless you really shortchanged it during the incubation period.

Your spells aren't limited to just the dragons in your employ. With the right ingredients, you can affect entire villages, as well as the other Dragonmasters. One effective tactic for raising money is to take over several small villages, then use your spells to increase the population. With a low tax rate and your spells, you can build up a large tax base, then slowly increase the taxes until the village's resistance rate is just below 50%.

The game's designers have made calling up the right information at the right time a simple matter. The Library, for example, displays three books which not only show you exactly what's going on in your own domain, but also relate the current events for all of Anrea. Knowing where the other Dragonmasters are operating is helpful since it allows you to avoid major conflicts with them until your power has sufficiently grown. *Dragon Lord* also imparts all the scenarios involving your dragons and their conquests with some beautiful graphics. This is one of the most attractive role-playing adventures yet. The gorgeous screens allow you to almost feel the oppressive heat of the Incubation Room and smell the strange effluvia from the bubbling flasks in the Spell Laboratory. Even the game interface — in many games a drab array of icons — is fun to use because of the excellent graphics.

While some may quibble with the idea of taking on the persona of what most people would consider a dirty rotten scoundrel, many game players will realize that this is indeed a small price to pay for having a good time with *Dragon Lord*. The focus on raising a brood of dragons is a nice touch, even if most parenting manuals never include such useful procedures as razing a village or ripping the throat out of an enemy dragon. So hide your scruples for a couple of hours and check to see if there are any dragon eggs in the pantry.



By casting your spells wisely, you can modify your dragons to fit your particular game strategy. Just remember to create at least one dragon with really good eyesight.



As befits the evil aggressor that you are, you go after the weak, defenseless villages first so you can build up a large population of semi-devoted taxpayers. They don't have to love you, but you'll take in more money if they don't totally despise you.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA EGA, CGA, Hercules, and Tandy 16-color graphics; hard drive recommended; joystick and mouse optional; AdLib sound board supported.

F-15 STRIKE

RICHARD SHEFFIELD

If at first glance you think that *F-15 Strike Eagle II* looks similar to *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, you're absolutely right. The folks at **MicroProse** have taken their old bestseller, *F-15 Strike Eagle*, and added the three-dimensional graphics system from their award-winning *F-19* to create *F-15 II*. But don't be fooled into thinking that *F-15 II* is just an *F-19* clone. Though they may look alike, the game play is vastly different.

F-19 was a game of silent avoidance. In *F-15 II* the object isn't sneaking past the enemy. As a matter of fact, almost every enemy installation in the area already knows you're there. So as a Strike Eagle pilot, you just jut out your jaw and say, "Whaddaya gonna do about it?"



The director mode lets you know what is going on around you. Here, a SAM shoots off the rail. Better check your radar display.

Deciding to simulate the McDonnell Douglas F-15 Strike Eagle back in 1985 with the first *F-15* was a stroke of genius. Since the Strike Eagle was designed as both a dogfighter and a ground attack aircraft, a game based on it allows for both types of action-filled activities. All the *F-15 II* missions have primary and secondary ground targets which must be attacked through a swarm of enemy aircraft. This game *never* lacks action.

And you get into the action quickly. Unlike other MicroProse games, there are very few start-up screens to plow through before starting your first flight. As soon as your wheels leave the tarmac (or flight deck, since there are carrier-based missions, too), the mission is underway.

The uncluttered cockpit layout makes even the most difficult assignments as simple as possible. Three CRT (cathode ray tube) screens across the bottom keep you informed about your tactical situation with a radar display, a moving map, and an enhanced video image, called the TrackCam, of any target. Flight information is displayed on the HUD (heads up display), which is superimposed over the out-the-window view.

There are a number of keyboard commands used in *F-15 II*, but MicroProse decided against its usual keyboard overlay. Instead, the command list is kept as short as possible and mnemonic devices identify the keys. The "S" key, then, stands for short-range missile, the "M" key indicates medium range, and so on. Other commands are automatic. For example, if you choose an air-to-ground missile, the tracking system automatically switches to air-to-ground mode. Simplicity and ease of operation are paramount in this game.



There is a lot to see on the ground in F-15 II. *As you approach this surface-to-air (SAM) site, note the spinning radar dish and the missile launchers.*

F-15 II may be simple to operate, but there is no shortage of graphics flash. A number of different out-of-the-aircraft views allow you to see your aircraft from the side, your plane from a chase plane behind you, your plane and your target at the same time — you can even ride along on a sidewinder as it tracks and destroys an enemy aircraft.

One very entertaining bit of graphics fun in *F-15 II* is its "director mode," which enables you to get movie-style "cut shots" of action taking place outside your view. If an enemy aircraft takes off from a nearby



Heads up after takeoff! There's always a bogey in the area. But a quick sidewinder shot should take care of that little problem.

EAGLE II



Use the tactical view for a great shot of your F-15 closing in for the kill.



Keep an eye out all around. Don't let a bad guy sneak up on your six!



As you would expect with a MicroProse game, there are ranks to be gained and decorations to win. An outstanding mission will earn the Congressional Medal of Honor.

base or a surface-to-air missile springs to life, you get a closeup view of the action.

If the seven missions in the original *F-15 Strike Eagle* were not enough for you, you'll be pleased to know that there are now probably hundreds of different primary and secondary targets — and you'll rarely get the same mission twice. The action takes place over one of four international hot spots — Libya, the Persian Gulf, Vietnam, and the Middle East. The use of genuine targets and cities really adds to the realism and enjoyment.

As with most graphics-intensive games, the speed of the screen update can suffer if you're using a slow machine. To combat this, MicroProse lets the user adjust the level of ground detail to improve the screen speed as needed. The highest level of detail is certainly not required for a satisfying gaming session. The difficulty level can also be adjusted to fit novices and aces alike.

Overall, the air-to-air action in *F-15 II* is very good. Real air combat maneuvers yield good results and close-in gunfighting is a blast. But the air-to-ground portion of the game may be too easy for experienced gamers. The original version required skill to line up and time your bomb drops. *F-15 II* uses Maverick missiles which are simply pointed in the general direction of the target and fired. Your only challenge is getting close enough to use the missiles. And you still can't play head-to-head missions with a friend via a modem.

This updated *F-15 Strike Eagle* is a tight, well-done package. Though true realism may be lacking in certain elements, generally, compromises were made to improve the action and game play. After all, accessible dogfighting and fun is what *F-15 Strike Eagle II* is all about.

GP

Hardware requirements: 128K minimum memory; EGA or CGA graphics; joystick optional. Must boot from a 5 1/2" A drive.

HARD BALL II

BRIAN CARROLL



San Francisco's Candlestick Park adds weather's unpredictability to the drama of the game. There are seven stadiums to choose from.

Last year's World Series is a fast-fading memory, and this baseball season is scarcely underway. This spells trouble for hard-core baseball fans. Maybe the best cure for those between-season withdrawal pains is a few hours spent playing *Hardball II*.



The catcher's view is clearly the best view when you're standing in the batter's box. You'll get the best possible look at the ball.

This **Accolade** release is, of course, the follow-up to the 1985 hit, *Hardball*, which sold more than 500,000 copies. The newer edition has all the elements that made its predecessor a bestseller, as well as a few surprises.

Probably the most welcome addition is *Hardball II*'s team editor feature. With it you can create any team conceivable. Translate your best baseball cards into the dream team for all ages. How about the Babe in right, Mattingly at first, and Sandy on the mound? It's a baseball fan's dream come true.

Equally pleasing are improvements made in playability. Throws from the outfield now take much less time. The infielders — previously a collection of statues — now actually play defense for you. In fact, you better have them reacting as soon as the ball is hit, or you're in for a long afternoon.

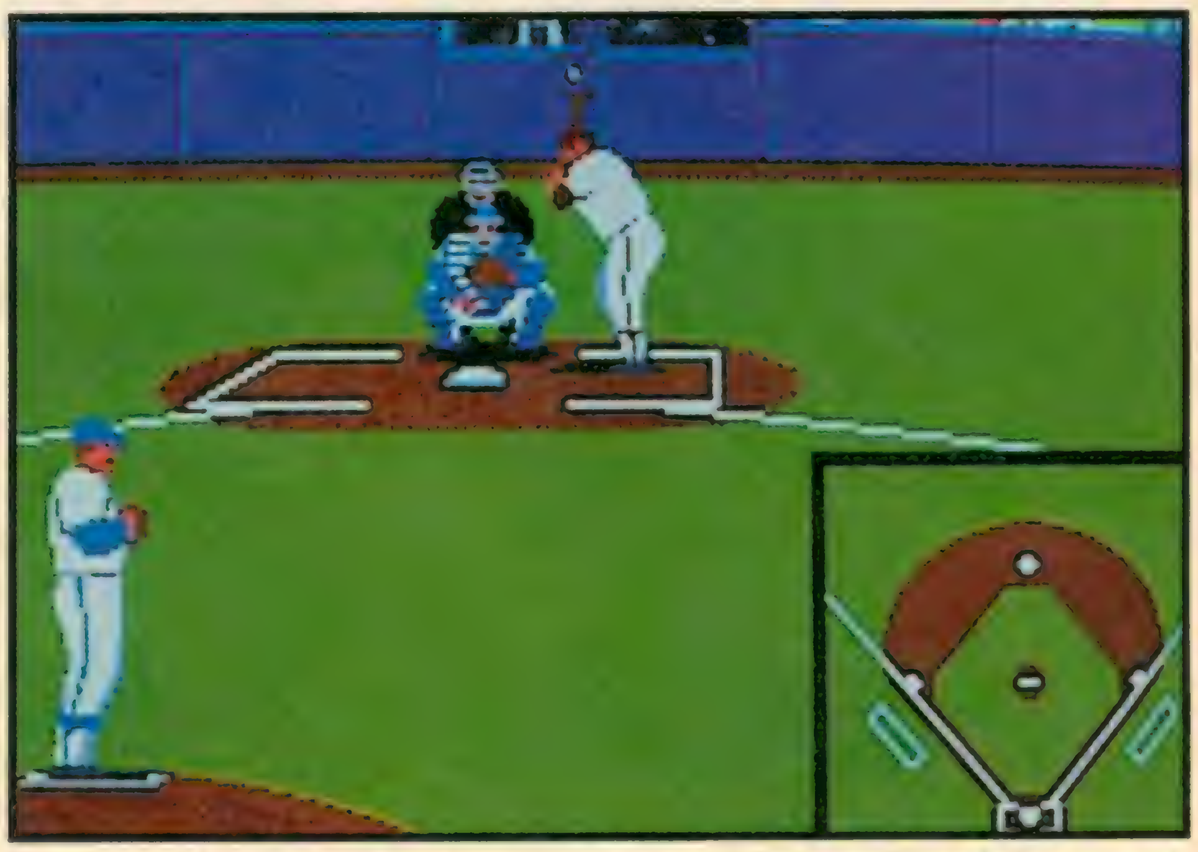
Number crunchers will appreciate the game's ability to compile and display statistics in virtually every category. The stats are revised after each at-bat and from game to game as well.

There are a few rough edges in *Hardball II*. Loading the game for the first time can be frustrating, for example. Even if you're anxious to dive right into the action, you first have to wade through various puddles of options. But don't get discouraged — the game action is well worth the wait.

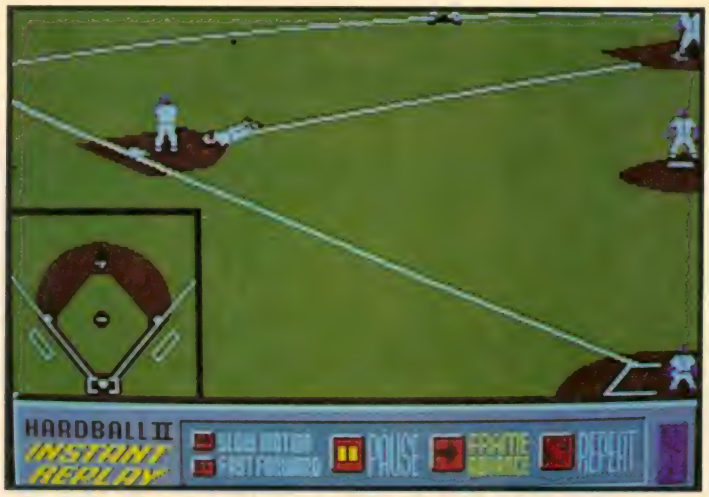
And give Accolade credit for breaking down the pitcher-batter match-up into such detail. The player's control over pitches and swings has never been better. *Hardball II* is the first PC baseball package that allows players to employ complex pitching strategies. That's bad news for hitters.

To do well in *Hardball II*, you have to hit well. To hit well, you have to practice, practice, practice. Work on timing and waiting. Don't try to guess every pitch. And since you can't read the pitcher's mind, wait for the pitch you want. This will force the pitcher to throw more strikes. He's going to have to throw it over the plate sooner or later, so try sitting on the ball. Patience is a virtue all great hitters have in common.

Like the pitchers, the hitters are controlled pitch by



The centerfield view is the one you always see on television. It can help you most when pitching.



After fielding the ball, our shortstop has decided to try to peg the runner going home.

pitch. From the batting menu you can steal bases, bunt, try for a ground ball, or go for the fences. You can also elect to swing high, low, inside, or outside. By setting the game so that you can't see the pitcher's location selection, you can be as much in the dark as major league hitters are.

A common mistake when playing defense in *Hardball II* is to overreact once the ball is hit. Remember, the computer automatically selects the fielder you control. The key is not to use your controls too soon. Do so, and you might have your pitcher shagging fly balls in centerfield — which won't win too many ball games.

As player/manager, there are a myriad of details to attend to, not the least of which is pitching. *Hardball II* pitchers tire out after a given number of innings, so you need to get some action going in the bull pen at the appropriate time. Relief pitchers need at least one inning to loosen up, so plan ahead. It won't help your plans for the pennant to have that first inning the reliever's first in the game. However, you also want to avoid tiring him out in warmups, so exercise good judgment.

Managers must also decide their infield strategy. Using the menus, you can have your infielders set up for the double play, guard the first- and third-base lines, or close in at the corners. *Hardball II* even lets you design your own defense. Use the custom option to align your players where you want them on the field.

It's impossible to write about *Hardball II* without mentioning the available parks. Although no official teams are available, official ballparks are yours for the asking. San Francisco's Candlestick Park won't give you an earthquake, but it does offer those enormous foul areas. Toronto's SkyDome looks just like the real thing, and home runs are just as difficult to hit. Then there's Yankee Stadium with its short right field deck and, of course, Boston's Fenway Park with the Green Monster in all its glory. Each park forces a different strategy, and each park thwarts you in its own way.



The pull-down menus will take a little getting used to.

This sparkling game obviously has enough options to keep the game interesting, regardless of your level of play or how long you stay at it. So please rise for the singing of our national anthem — and let's play ball!

GP



Once the ball is hit, the computer will give you control over that player closest to the ball.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for Tandy); EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick optional; supports sound boards.

HOVERFORCE

GARY MEREDITH

By the middle of the twenty-first century, the streets are in the hands of the crime lords. Biotech mutations known as Alterants control all criminal activities in huge MetaCity, including, most importantly, the distribution of the drug Aftershock. This pharmacological nightmare induces a state officially known as "neo-steroidal rage," which turns humans into vicious, mindless killers. Lord Darkenill, ringleader of this new "industry" and himself an Alterant, has carved up MetaCity into quadrants overseen by him and his three lieutenants. His quadrant, the Red Zone, is where all the Aftershock is manufactured.

In *Hoverforce*, from **Accolade**, you're a member of the city's elite Red Wasp Unit, which has been given the task of tracking down the drug shipments and destroying the Alterants. To give you an edge on the criminals, you're equipped with the latest in urban assault hovercraft, the HoverKill 1000.

This baby is fast and maneuverable, and can be outfitted with a wide array of weaponry, armor, and propulsion upgrades. As you interdict the Aftershock shipments, you'll be credited with cash, which you use to buy the upgrades necessary for the tougher enemies on higher levels. The unmodified HoverKill 1000 is pretty potent, but you're going to need the very best in firepower and protection to take on Lord Darkenill.

You begin battling in the Blue Quadrant, the turf of Johnny Psyclops. The best piece of advice you can take with you into any quadrant is to fire at everything that moves. You're in this by yourself, so you can bet that anyone else you see is a bad guy.

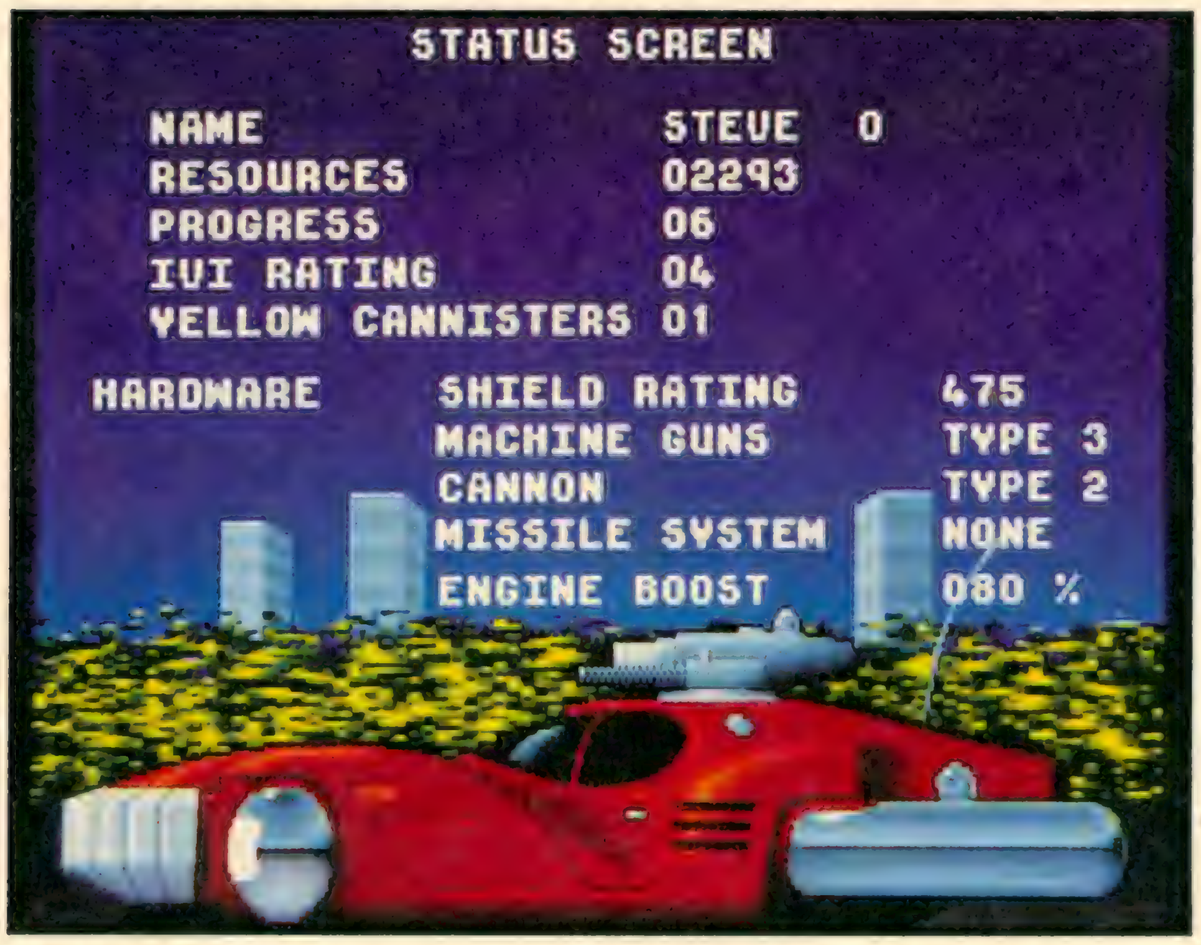
When you destroy a drug ship (there are several different types, each with its own abilities and weaknesses), either a drug canister or money will appear. You need to collect both: the money for improvements and repairs on your hovercraft, and the canisters for evidence. You must collect a specified number of canisters (which varies with each drug run) before you can take on the drug lord for that quadrant. And you must defeat each drug lord three times (despite their drug dependency, these are pretty tough guys) before you can move on to the next level.



The flying saucers are usually the most numerous members of a drug lord's fleet. They're fairly maneuverable, but won't take nearly as much punishment as a bodyguard saucer or a cruiser.

Hoverforce is a game that demands good reflexes and sound strategy. While it's simple enough just to fly around each quadrant, blasting away at whatever moves, you'll soon discover that this is a very inefficient way of proceeding. Each interdiction mission you attempt has a time limit, and a berserk "loose cannon" approach doesn't insure that you'll pick up the evidence and cash you need to take on the drug lord. Fortunately, when you do have to replay a mission (and chances are you'll replay many), you have the advantage of knowing where the drug lord and his minions will be.

The game doesn't randomly generate game scenarios, a fact you can use to your advantage. If there's a cluster of Alterants in the northeast sector of a quadrant during a particular mission, for example, they'll be there every time you replay the mission. You have a similar advantage at the end of each interdiction mission, when you've picked up all the drug canisters and just need to terminate the drug



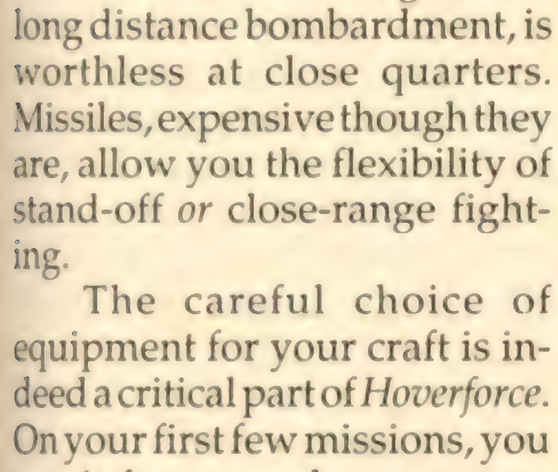
The HoverKill 1000 is one mean machine, but it's no better than its pilot. Stopping Aftershock runs calls for quick reflexes and a well-developed strategy.

lord. All drug runs occur at night, so when daybreak arrives, the drug lord slips into a convenient building. All you have to do is wait for evening and he'll pop out of the same building--and, hopefully, right into your line of fire.

Although you start out with only a machine gun, you can buy more weapons to expand your arsenal, so a good deal of your strategy depends on the type of weapon you select. The short range of the machine gun requires that you do most of your fighting close to the enemy if you hope to inflict any real damage. On the other hand, a cannon, great for long distance bombardment, is worthless at close quarters. Missiles, expensive though they are, allow you the flexibility of stand-off *or* close-range fighting.

The careful choice of equipment for your craft is indeed a critical part of *Hoverforce*. On your first few missions, you won't have much money, so it's important to spend what you do have wisely. The first step is finding a store, which isn't too difficult if you use the tracker screen in your craft. (If this screen becomes damaged, you can always find a store by looking for buildings surrounded by shadows).

Once inside a store, you're



Each store is divided into three sections. Head for the armor and electronics section if you need to fortify your shielding or replace damaged radar and mapping modules.



At last — you've picked up all the drug canisters you need for evidence. Now it's time to get the despicable Alterant druglord in your sight and terminate.

presented with three types of equipment — armor (along with radar and other electronic devices), weaponry, and propulsion. Don't worry about upgrading your propulsion early on — the hovercraft is more than fast enough to catch all the ships you encounter in the first few drug runs. You should split your spending between the best armor you can afford and at least a minimum improvement in your weapon. You'll be amazed at the difference a minor gun or cannon improvement can make in your kill rate.

You also need to familiarize yourself with your cockpit readouts. The information from the radar and mapping features is invaluable, and helps you avoid wasting precious time. The directional display is especially important, since it not only indicates the location of stores, but also pinpoints the drug lord's position during runs.

Hoverforce is an amazingly smooth game that gives you the sensation of racing down city streets only a few inches above the ground. Usually, a simulator/arcade game such as *Hoverforce* only shows its best moves on a relatively fast 286 or 386 computer. Incredibly, the game is just as smooth on a slow 286, and can even be played enjoyably on a fast XT machine with the proper graphics. A big surprise is that the game plays better when you use a mouse rather than a joystick. The control interface is so sensitive that only a slight movement of the mouse produces very quick turns.

Very few computer arcade games *or* simulators have ever approached the realistic feeling of *Hoverforce*. The graphics are excellent, both in game screens and in the subsidiary screens. The sound, especially when you fire your weapons, is great when sent through one of the supported sound boards. Accolade has done its homework on this game, making *Hoverforce* the standard by which other simulator/arcade games should be judged.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory for VGA, MCGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics, 512K for EGA and CGA graphics; hard disk recommended; Ad Lib and Soundblaster boards supported; supports mouse and joystick.

JONES IN THE

GARY MEREDITH

If you think you've got it rough, just take a look at Jones. Here he is, living a life of self-sacrifice and industry — with nothing to show for it. Of course, you'd probably bet a ton on doing a lot better under the same circumstances, right? Well, now you get the chance to put your money where your mouth is. *Jones in the Fast Lane*, a recent release from the folks at **Sierra**, puts you in charge of your destiny in a game of life that's sure to bring a newfound sense of humility to even the most greedy, brazen, baby-booming consumer.

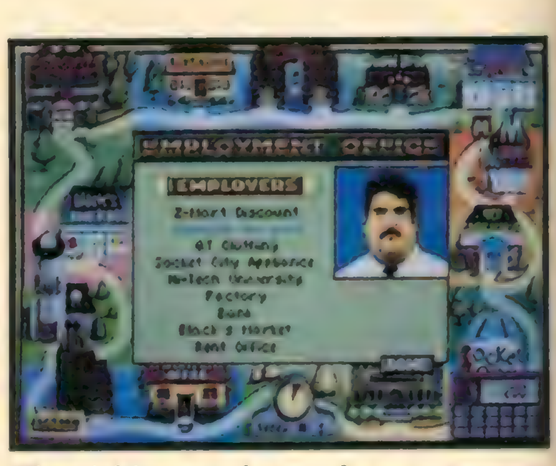


After choosing your character, the next order of business is to set your life goals. Remember that the higher your expectations, the longer it takes to play the game.

You begin the game residing in a flea-trap apartment with only $200 to your name. Somehow, you must parlay these humble beginnings into *la dolce vita*. You have the option of making your journey to solvency and bliss by yourself, or in competition with up to three other players. If you want the competition but don't have anyone else to play against, you can take your chances against Jones himself. Be forewarned, however, that he's tired of being everyone's doormat and is primed for a ruthless and inexorable climb up the corporate ladder. Turns are in one-week increments as measured by the clock at the bottom of the screen. Within that week, you must eat at least once (or suffer the consequences of your weakened state) and do whatever else is required to thrive.

Once you've picked your character (represented by one of four digitized actors), you'll need to set your life goals. What you give priority to — choices are happiness, career, money, and education — determines not only the difficulty and length of the game, but also the path by which you should proceed. If, for example, you place a higher emphasis on happiness and education, then you may need to earn only enough to pay for college, a stereo, and a VCR. As in life, however, your game actions are interrelated, so getting a better education can lead to getting a better job, if you choose to pursue that path. (Interestingly, you'll find that the desire to rise in the hierarchy becomes part of your life plan, regardless of how you originally set your career goals.)

In most cases, you'll spend the first few weeks of the game simply eating, sleeping, and working. Because you have no education or job experience, be prepared to take whatever they offer you at the Acne Employment Agency, even if the work is rather menial. It's also very important that you remember to pay attention to your nourishment. A turn without some food will result in a time penalty on your next turn, so eat something, even if it's only some fries at the local Monolith Burger restaurant.



The pickings at the employment agency will be pretty slim when you begin your life journey. Take whatever you can find, and save your money for a better education.

The prices at Black's Market are much better, especially if you buy several weeks' worth of food at a time. You should remember, however, that your apartment isn't equipped with the latest in kitchen appliances. In fact, there is no refrigerator. So those groceries may spoil, along with your anticipated savings on nutrition. Ideally, your first major purchase, after you've accumulated a bit of cash, should be a fridge. Then you'll be able to save money by buying at the supermarket, and avoid the insufferable kid behind the counter at the burger joint as well.

Try to get in as many hours of work as possible, with a long-range goal of attending school and improving your lot in life. Your course of study in school will determine your life's direction. Academic courses will prepare you for a career in business or education, but if your life goals lean towards an accumulation of wealth, you'll probably want to go into engineering and pick up a post-graduate degree. Some of the higher positions, such as the executive levels in the factory, require combination degrees, so plan on studying a lot.

FAST LANE

When you've accumulated enough money and education to fulfill your goals, you can either spend your time acquiring the finer things of life or concentrate on making more money by playing the stock market. You can be sure that life in *Jones in the Fast Lane*, like real life, can be quite volatile, and nothing, not even your well-paying job, is certain. Just when you find yourself on top of the world, you'll read the next day's headline about a stock-market crash or a rise in unemployment. And the latter usually means a rise in *your* unemployment.



You may find yourself working for this kid early on. Until you can buy a refrigerator to keep your food, you'll probably have to munch a few Monolith fries.

If you're a smart ladder-climber, you'll put as much money as you can spare into a savings account. This not only gives you a hedge against an uncertain future, but it also provides a single, safe place to keep any extra money. This is, after all, supposed to be the real world, so you shouldn't be surprised if you are occasionally relieved of your cash by an enterprising young thief (also, no doubt, bent on attaining his own set of life goals). It's best to carry only the amount of cash you need to function, and put the rest in the bank.

Jones in the Fast Lane is one of the first of Sierra's new VGA games, and though it may not look much like its predecessors, it nonetheless carries on Sierra's traditions of smooth play and slightly twisted humor. The only animation in *Jones* is found in the title and closing screens, and in the digitized walk of the actors. Nonetheless, the graphics are very nicely done, and give the game something of a storybook quality. Unlike most of Sierra's earlier efforts, this game almost demands to be played with a mouse or a joystick. You may use the keyboard's cursor keys, but this slows play down considerably.

While *Jones in the Fast Lane* can be played solo, its real entertainment value is as a party game. Because it's easy to learn, funny, colorful, and apropos to the times, it could become the '90s version of the parlor game. At the very least, it should give a lot of people a new appreciation for the hidden complexities of modern everyday life.

GP



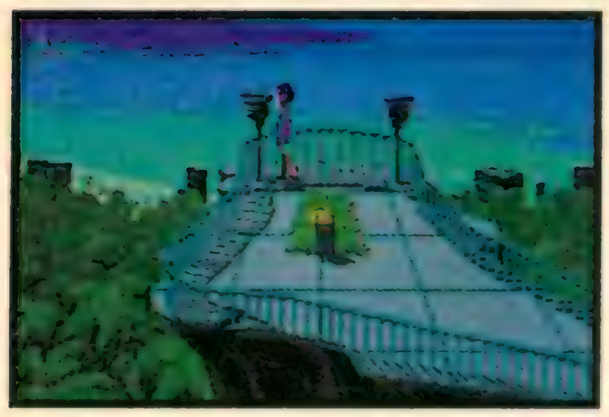
With the rash of robberies, it's not safe to carry a lot of cash, so leave most of your earnings in the bank. When your funds have grown a bit, you might give the stock market a shot.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory (512K for 16-color graphics); VGA, MCGA, EGA, and Tandy 16-Color graphics; major sound boards supported; mouse and joystick optional.

LEISURE SUIT

GARY MEREDITH

You have to give a guy like Larry Laffer credit. Most people would have given up after losing a true love, as Larry lost Eve in the beginning of *Leisure Suit Larry II: Looking for Love in Several Wrong Places*. But good ol' Larry doesn't know the meaning of the word "quit." (Actually, Larry missed school that day and doesn't know the meaning of "quince," "quisling," or "quixotic," either.) He defeated the foul Dr. Nonookee and married his *real* true love, Kalalau, daughter of the chief of exotic Nontoonyt Island.



Master of all he surveys — or so Larry thinks. As long as you're here, take a peek through the binoculars on the left. There's nothing like getting things started right.

All seemed sunlight and orange blossoms until Larry came home one day to find his beloved Kalalau in the arms of another. In one fell swoop, Larry lost his wife, his job, and his security. The only thing he had left was — you guessed it — his trusty leisure suit.

In Sierra's *Leisure Suit Larry III: Passionate Patti in Pursuit of Pulsating Pectorals*, Larry is on the prowl once again, looking for that one perfect woman. On Nontoonyt Island, he's got a lot of women from which to choose, but will they choose him? The years have not been kind to Larry, but with a little effort, he just might work himself into the winner's circle one more time.

You must help him find his way through a maze of women with names such as Tawni, Bambi, and Cherri. To secure his divorce from Kalalau, Larry must deal with a kinky, cross-dressing lawyer. To get his money back from a beach blanket bimbette, he develops his hidden talents as a woodcarver and dressmaker. To break into videos with an amorous aerobics instructor, he experiences pain and gain in a raunchy spa.



It was a shock to find Kalalau loved another, but finding out with whom she's now sharing her hot tub is worse. Anyway, come back a bit later, even if it's just to check the mail.

But just when Larry seems doomed to a life of meaningless relationships, he happens upon a bar pianist named Passionate Patti, who changes his life. And your life, too, for when Larry wanders off into the jungle, you become Patti, and spend the rest of the game searching for — no surprises here — your own true love.

Be forewarned, however, that this is a game for mature audiences. There's lots of raunchiness, and even though it's good-natured sleaze, it may offend some people.

If you've played either of the previous *Leisure Suit Larry* games — or any other Sierra adventures for that matter — you already know that the bywords for playing are "observe," "improvise," and "save." Whenever you come to a new scene, you must look at everything. In turn, you must often contrive not-so-obvious ways for using whatever objects you find. That interestingly shaped piece of wood you find in the forest is a good example of this.

And it's so easy to find



Tawni has your credit card and your self-respect. If you want to get anything out of this relationship (like money), you'll have to go native in a big way, and work on your weaving and whittling.



You'll find Suzi Howe — of Dewey, Cheatem, and Howe — most helpful with the legal tangles of your divorce. Just remember to wear something frilly if you want her full *cooperation.*

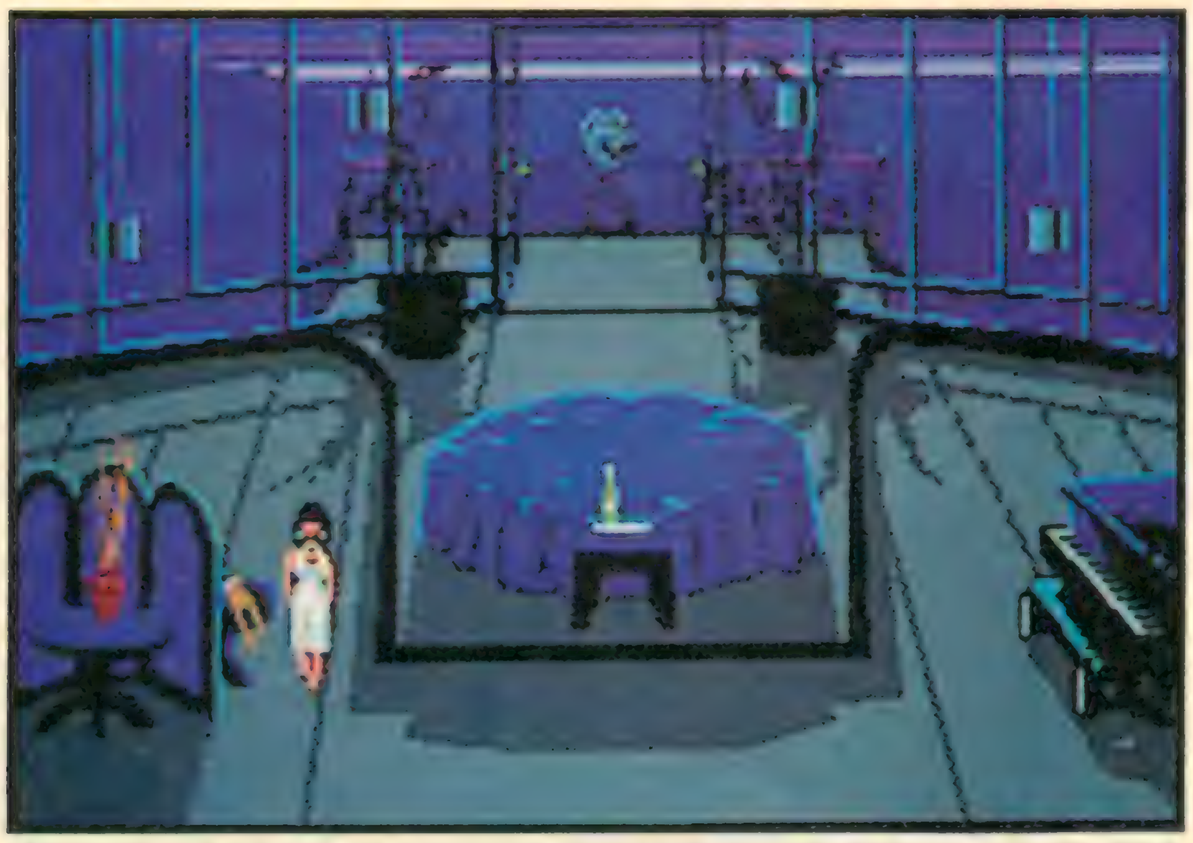
LARRY III: PASSIONATE PATTI IN PURSUIT OF PULSATING PECTORALS



Bambi's video could be bigger than Jane Fonda's, but you won't co-star with her unless you make use of these modern instruments of torture. By the way, don't forget personal hygiene.



At last, the woman of your dreams. Too bad that her *dreams seem to include a jerk named Arnold. Her slumbering whispers are enough to push Larry over the edge and into a dense and dangerous jungle.*



Now that you've acquired a woman's point of view, don't forget to accessorize properly. You'll definitely need the bra, panties, and pantyhose where you're going, as well as that empty champagne bottle.

yourself falling off a cliff or being attacked by a vicious feral pig that saving becomes a natural part of game play. Sierra's save feature is the ultimate in simplicity, but if you need even more help, now there's a feature that reminds you to save. You set the interval, and the game will ask you automatically if you want to save your progress.

Your single most important tool in *Leisure Suit Larry III* is your copy of *Nontoonyt Tonight*, the island's magazine of useful facts. If you've taken even a cursory notice of recent events, you'll have no trouble answering the game entrance questions at the beginning of play. But you won't get very far at all without *Nontoonyt Tonight* because buried in the articles and ads are all the clues you'll need to bring Patti and Larry together for a final sequence worthy of Mel Brooks.

So grab your leisure suit (you still have one, don't you?) and let's go find Patti a man and Larry a woman.



After a tortuous trek through the bamboo as Patti, you are finally reunited with your Larry. Unfortunately, you're now both ingredients in the natives' soup du jour. Let's hope you didn't forget anything back at the bar.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; hard disk recommended; mouse or joystick optional; supports sound cards.

MIDWINTER

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

When *Midwinter* first arrived in our offices for review, we played it compulsively for hours at a time. Clearly, it was one of the freshest and most unusual strategy war games to come on the market in many years.

Developed for **MicroPlay** by Maelstrom Software of the U.K., *Midwinter* was conceived as an Atari ST game, and in that format it has sold many thousands of copies on the European market. As ported over for the PC, the graphics are distinctively different from those found in most IBM-compatible games, but they are nevertheless first-rate.

So too is the concept behind the game. *Midwinter* is set in the year 2099 A.D., during a new Ice Age that was set off when a giant meteorite collided with the Earth decades earlier. Fully half of the rather massive documentation, in fact, consists of a fairly technical scientific monograph explaining the basic premise detailing the climatic and social changes such a catastrophe could wreak on the ecosystem and on human culture. Although many game players will find their eyes glazing over during some of the more jargon-laden passages, you should at least skim these pages, for they make the game frighteningly plausible.

When the game begins, Midwinter Isle is the only place on earth where an organized society has managed to flourish. Here, a scattered confederation of human settlements called the Free Villages has managed to tap geothermal power sources and regenerate the rudiments of industry and culture. Lacking any organized external enemies (the situation elsewhere on Earth is apparently desperate in the extreme), the Midwinter settlements have been at peace for many years. Their only armed forces are a handful of constables that compose the Free Villages Peace Force.

But now, the Free Villages face an invasion by a murderous megalomaniac calling himself General Masters. Masters's mechanized columns, consisting of missile-armed snow buggies, supply sleds, and command vehicles, are fanning out aggressively and have caught the disorganized Peace Force totally by surprise.

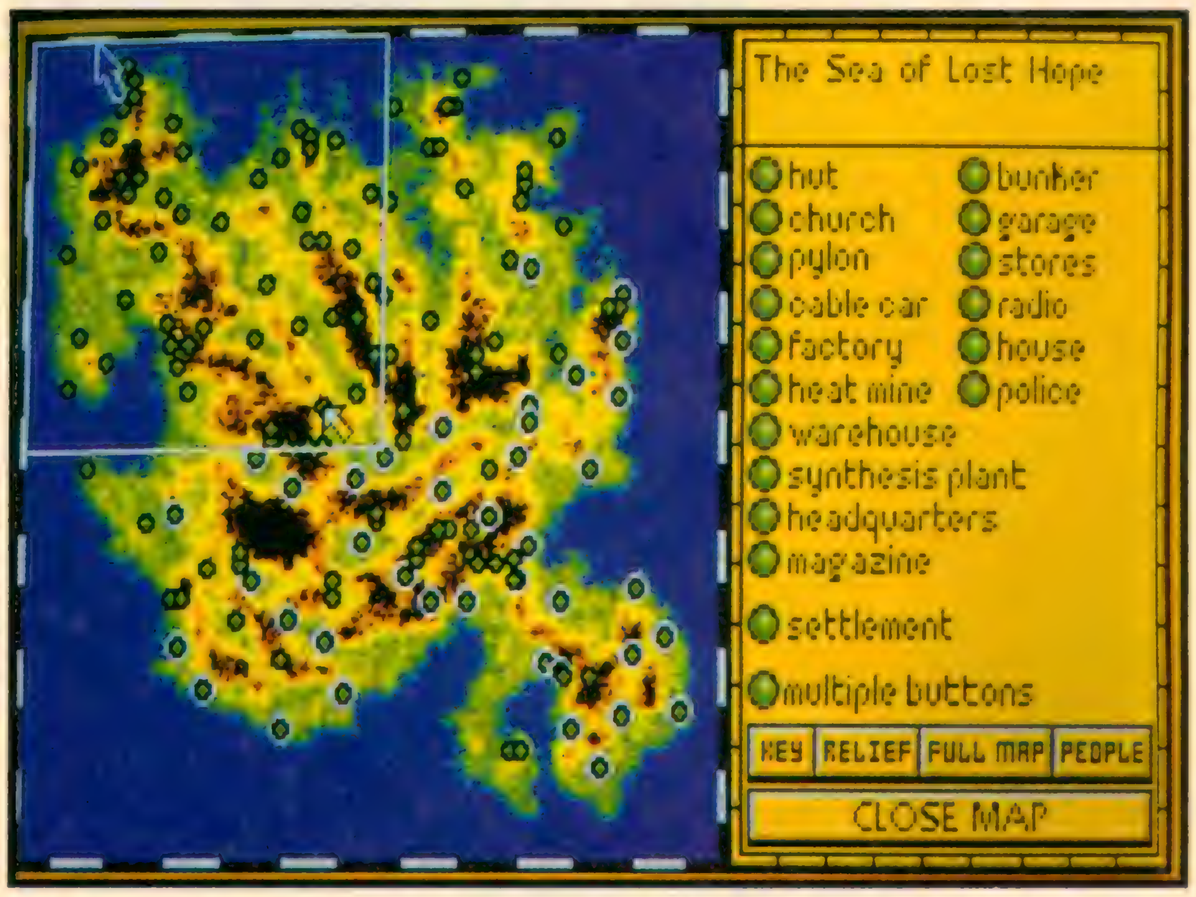
At this point, the game player steps into the role of Captain John Stark, commander of the Peace Force. Things start with a bang: Stark finds himself suddenly under attack by a swarm of enemy vehicles in a remote location far from any other villages. If Stark can fight his way out of this first encounter, he must hurriedly contact as many other Midwinter settlers as he can, both peace officers and civilians, in an attempt to organize resistance to the invaders.



Church towers in settlements make excellent vantage points for snipers.

Stark and the other characters that come under your control can travel by hang glider, snowmobile, or skis. You must improvise military tactics with whatever is at hand, depending on who or what is available at various locations. Snow buggies can carry missiles, for instance, and should be used as mobile strike units. Small missiles can even be mounted on hang gliders, which — after a lot of practice — can be used as tactical air support.

Sabotage missions behind enemy lines can cut off fuel and supplies, delaying the enemies' columns. Scorched-earth tactics (that is, blowing up everything



Plan your moves on this strategic map, which shows both personnel and resources, such as bunkers, garages, and heat mines.

useful in the enemy's path) can slow Masters even more — but such desperate measures obviously damage the settlements' powers of resistance as much as they hamper the advancing enemy. Sniper attacks against command and supply vehicles are particularly effective.

As Stark, you can recruit up to 32 characters. Each has his or her own personal quirks, affinities, and animosities; some people work well with each other, while others loathe one another and are virtually useless until matched with a more compatible character. Organizing and managing your human resources, in fact, is even more of a challenge than making optimal use of your firepower—which is rather considerable, even though the weapons you use are scattered all over the landscape.

Much of the action takes place from a first-person, eye-view perspective as the characters ski, drive, or hang glide over the craggy, snow-covered landscape. The fractal-generated, light-source graphics, a symphonic kaleidoscope of whites, blues, and shadowy grays, are striking. Few computer games can equal the landscape effects *Midwinter* shows you when you're hang gliding at 7,000 feet and looking down at a 45-degree angle — it's breathtaking.

Midwinter is a game of vast dimensions, with a playing area of 160,000 square miles. And it has a powerful appeal to any game player who's ever entertained fantasies of becoming an intrepid guerilla leader ("Lawrence of Greenland" maybe?). The need to devise unorthodox tactics opens up virtually limitless tactical and strategic possibilities.

For the moment, though, let's put all the praise aside. As we played game after game, and always lost the war at about the same point, a sense of frustration set in that eventually could not be offset by the game's considerable merits.

First of all, *Midwinter* is very difficult to win. Every one of the 30 or more games we played began with Stark so far from any possible recruits, and the invaders' columns tearing across the landscape so quickly, that by the time Stark had managed to enlist two or three volunteers, Masters had already overrun three-fourths of the island. (When Masters captures all the geothermal heat mines, he wins.)

Despite the fact that there is a "companion" icon that lets you join compatible persons into one party, it's not possible to *move* them as one party unless they're in a vehicle. Nor, despite trying everything we could think of, could we ever figure out a way to get these rugged individualists to fight or maneuver together as organized units. The games always wound down to a losing conclusion with a dozen or so exhausted, dispirited individuals skiing or buggying over remote parts of the landscape, bushwhacking enemy units when they could — sometimes even doing a lot of damage — but never acting in concert, or according to a coherent tactical plan.

Unrealistically, the game also does not allow you to recapture vital installations from the enemy — all you can do is blow them up. In the case of factories and heat mines, this hurts your side as much, or worse, than it does the enemy.

Inquiries to the game's designers, however, revealed that there is a winning strategy (provided you're lucky enough to begin at one of the 24 random starting locations that's close to a garage). Recruit the fastest skiers you can find (Adams and Caygill, for example), get them and everyone they can recruit into buggies, then form a defensive line around a cluster of heat mines (the northwest corner of the island is a good spot). Although you cannot get the characters to fight as a unit, you can engage the enemy sequentially and, with a little luck, hold out until you're strong enough to counterattack. While we haven't won the game yet, we're getting a lot closer by using this strategy.



Much of Midwinter*'s action is from the first-person view; moving over the rugged arctic landscape is often exhilarating.*

Players who are looking for something strikingly different in the way of war games, and who can handle an extremely high level of frustration, should definitely give *Midwinter* a try. It's unique, and often startlingly beautiful.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; MCGA, VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Roland and Ad Lib sound cards; joystick and mouse recommended.

OVERLORD

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Conquer-the-galaxy games comprise one of the oldest and best-loved categories of computer entertainment. The reasons have to do with human nature. While most people would not want to live under the rule of an autocratic despot, who among us has not fantasized about being one?



The ultimate opponent, Rorn, is more godlike than human, more alien than the aliens.

Overlord, from **Virgin Mastertronic**, is the latest — and surely one of the classiest — in a long line of computer games designed to appeal to the megalomaniac in all of us. While it clearly owes something to its predecessors (*Empire* and *Reach for the Stars*, most notably), it sets a new standard for detail, complexity, and depth. And, like *Empire* and *Reach for the Stars*, it may very well come to be regarded as classic.

When the game begins, you are already supreme ruler of the Epsilon system, located at the edge of the known universe. During research on a new transdimensional hyperdrive, your scientists have discovered four new planetary systems, containing 6, 14, 30, and 30 uninhabited planets. These systems form a kind of no-man's...er, make that no-*being's*...land, and on the far side of each one is a rival alien despot who wants them not only for imperial aggrandizement, but also as a bridge to invade Epsilon. Only when you have wrested control of all four systems from your alien counterparts will your own corner of the universe be safe.

Each side begins with a single starbase at opposite ends of the disputed systems. The barren worlds in between have to be terraformed (or whatever the other species' equivalent might be), colonized, developed, garrisoned, and defended. Some worlds might be rich in minerals and fuels, while others may offer abundant energy or food resources.

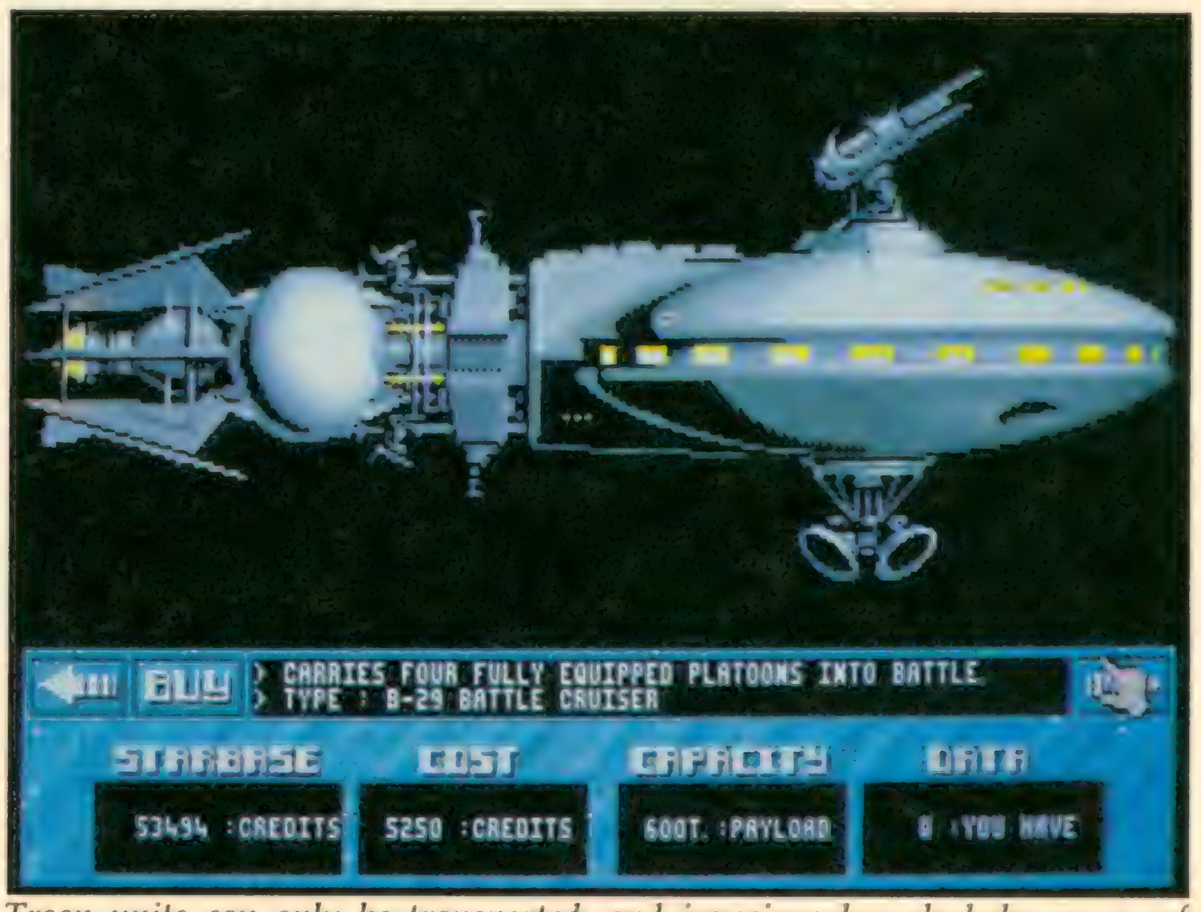
You and you alone (you *wanted* this job, remember?) must set priorities, manage resources, establish farming and mining operations, budget for equipment, set up cargo routes, recruit and train soldiers, procure armaments, and devise military strategies, both offensive and defensive.

While attending to these chores, you must also *govern*, and that means making a host of moral decisions (remember that your word is law!). Will your choices be compromised by such considerations as compassion and ecological balance, or will you ravage the environment, tax your subjects mercilessly, and sacrifice your soldiers by the thousands if your long-range strategy demands it? You may be surprised at some of your own decisions....

And, of course, while you're trying to create a stable, economically viable, militarily invulnerable empire, your alien counterpart is constantly on the move — probing, raiding, feinting, invading, drawing closer and closer.

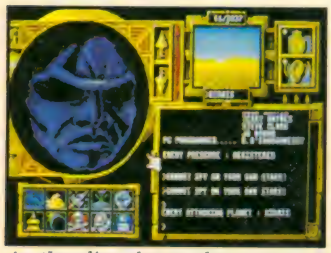
One thing that sets *Overlord* apart from most other resource-management games is the staggering complexity and fine-grained weave of its interrelated components, a baroque layering of harmonies and dissonances reflected in the moment-by-moment fluctuations of data on the main control screens.

You may be pondering how to equip your newest troops when the incoming-message alarm goes off, informing you that the colonists



Troop units can only be transported, and invasions launched, by means of interstellar battle cruisers.

on Planet Three are suddenly running out of food. You can, of course, let the blighters starve while you attend to more pressing business, or you can interrupt what you were doing and attend to the problem. But how can they be starving? The last time you checked the data for that planet, the sods had 600



As the alien draws closer to your starbase, his loathesome visage gains more definition against the map of your system.

tons of surplus food! Wait — there it is! An electromagnetic storm has swept the planet, shutting down the mining stations and cutting off the planet's indigenous source of fuel. Without fuel, the horticultural stations stopped working and it didn't take those 12,000 colonists long to eat those 600 tons of stored food. Now they're dying off like lemmings. And if the aliens get wind of the situation, they'll surely attack.

You can buy a new horticultural station and ship it to Planet Three in time to save some of the colonists — but if you do that, you can forget about equipping your new units with atomic mortars. Alternatively, you can load a cargo ship with an emergency shipment of fuel from Starbase reserves, but if you do *that*, you won't have enough fuel to launch that long-contemplated invasion of the fourth planet. Decisions, decisions!

Since *Overlord* moves in relentless realtime, you seldom have the luxury of contemplating your next move at leisure — from the moment you first make contact with the enemy, the pressure is on. If you dawdle, you lose. It's that simple. The web of choices and consequences rapidly becomes almost overwhelming — so you need to be ready to use the Save feature often and to try a variety of bold strategies.

What we've described pertains only to the easy, six-planet system. Playing at the 30-world level will stretch your mind (and nervous system) to the limits. *Overlord* is, in fact, one of the few strategy games that achieves the level of gut-grabbing velocity usually associated with great arcade games, even though there are no arcade sequences *per se* anywhere in it. Some players will find that *Overlord* is best enjoyed in short, intense playing sessions (30 to 40 minutes), interspersed with breaks for ice water, high-calorie snacks, or periods of meditation.

Misgivings about the game are few and minor. It seems illogical that you can't reinforce troops from the population of colonized planets (you have to send them back to Starbase and even then can only scrap and rebuild a depleted unit, not flesh it out and retrain it); some of the text messages are garbled; and there ought to be some provision for *slowing down* the passage of game time (the default setting may discourage some players) until the old learning curve kicks in. And finally, it would be nice to have some kind of total at-a-glance data screen (or screens, in the bigger scenarios) that allows you to study what's where while game time is suspended.

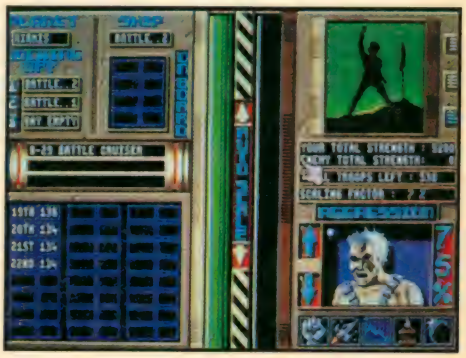
Given the game's extraordinary complexity, and the absolute need to master its multitudinous control systems for even a remote chance at victory, *Overlord* could have been written off quickly if the instruction manual had been badly organized or dauntingly written.

Fortunately, *Overlord*'s designers provide documentation that stands as a paradigm of how a manual for this kind of game ought to be constructed: methodical, completely illustrated (everything discussed gets a picture), and reassuringly *patient*, even for the most inexperienced gamer. The manual features a tutorial that explains every basic control system clearly, unambiguously, and in step-by-step fashion.

Vast amounts of data flow like tides beneath the elegant surface of this game, but the graphic presentation of all relevant statistics and processes is superbly logical and unfailingly attractive.

Overlord is a cunningly designed and compulsively playable addition to one of the most venerable genres in PC gaming. It's a megalomaniac's dream come true.

GP



You can adjust the aggression level of your troops from cautious, where low casualties mean slow victory, to berserk, where high casualties mean quick victory...sometimes.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (for EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics); 640K (for VGA graphics); mouse optional but recommended; supports sound boards.

PRINCE OF

GARY MEREDITH



With a 60-minute deadline, you can't afford just to stand around once you've escaped from your cell. That lower floor is ready to collapse, and you don't want to go with it.

Time is running out for the princess — literally. When she spurned the advances of the Grand Vizier, Jaffar, he kidnapped her and placed her in a room where she must watch the grains of sand that represent her life shift through a giant hourglass.

Jaffar has already stolen the throne of Persia from the princess' father, and now he means to complete his victory by possessing what the old sultan valued most — his daughter. She has only one hour to decide whether to marry the Vizier ... or suffer a horrible death.



For now the princess spurns the advances of Jaffar. But within the hour, she must give in to his desire or suffer a horrible death.

It seems like so long ago that you, a wandering young adventurer, met the lovely princess. Then, as now, you knew in your heart that your lives would forever be intertwined. But you never suspected the lengths to which Jaffar would go to possess her — until Jaffar's men threw you into the endless dungeon below the sultan's palace.

Broderbund's *Prince of Persia* gives you the choice of rotting away in the dungeon while Jaffar terrorizes the princess, or doing something about it. As the action begins, you have discovered a way out of your cell, but nothing more. You're unarmed, with no idea of how to escape or what you may encounter around the next corner.

The dungeon is filled with all sorts of hidden traps and puzzles designed to frustrate even the most inspired hero. Seemingly solid floors disintegrate at your steps, gates open and close by means of cleverly hidden switching panels, and razor-sharp jaws of metal await the unwary adventurer. Jaffar's own dungeon guards prowl the corridors, savoring an opportunity for swordfighting practice.

You must rely on your wits to save your princess — that, and the near-superhuman acrobatic skills which enable you to make jumps and climbs that would leave an ordinary human gasping for breath, or worse, lying in a puddle of blood and guts on the dank dungeon floor. But you needn't be unarmed for long; somewhere near your cell, the remains of some poor unfortunate contain a sword that's yours for the taking.

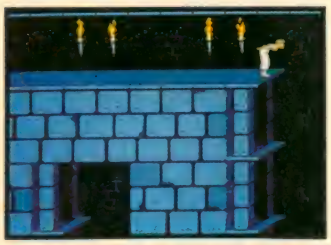
Of course, being a dashing and brave young adventurer means you quite naturally have a ready command of the blade. Jaffar's guards should pose little problem — at least those in the dungeons. The guards are more challenging the higher you go, but your prime consideration at the start is just getting out of that dungeon.

What sets *Prince of Persia* apart from the usual sword-and-sorcery action game is the fantastic animation. To everyone used to dealing with the choppy, unrealistic action of games prior to this, the character movements in *Prince of Persia* will be a revelation. There were more than a few "oohs" and "ahs" when we first loaded the game and viewed the stun-



If only you had been a little bit lighter on your feet! Jaffar obviously spent a lot of money on this home security system.

PERSIA



There isn't any obvious landing place here, but if you expect to get much further, you'll have to make a leap of faith.

ning animation. Films of real actors performing various movements were used as a basis for the animation, and consequently there's a naturalness to the characters not seen before on PC screens.

When your hero climbs down from a ledge, his body swings quite realistically before dropping to the floor. Sword battles are a joy to watch, as fine movements such as the turned wrist in a parry are produced in lifelike detail. If this is a sample of what lies ahead for computer action games, then bring on the future.

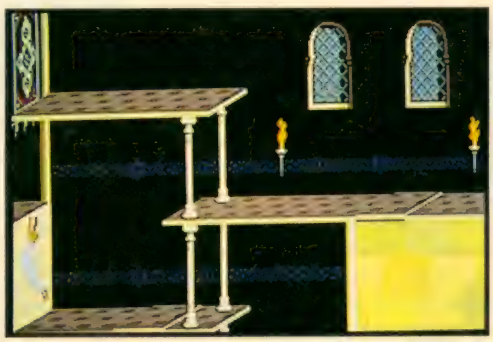
If this were simply an action game, the graphics might even be enough to recommend it. Fortunately, there's a lot more to *Prince of Persia* than that. Throughout the more than 250 rooms you must explore in your search for the princess, you encounter more than enough puzzles to keep you scratching your head for a long while. Just getting out of the dungeon may prove too tricky for some, as there are several places where straightforward logic doesn't apply. You have to learn to look at a problem sideways — much like in a Sierra or Origin game.

Since you won't find many simple solutions to the puzzles, your best strategy may be to play the game with a friend or two — different viewpoints may reveal solutions that a single player might miss. For example, on the second level of the dungeon, you must climb to the top of the ledge. If you go to the left, you reach a closed gate and a wide chasm that's just barely passable.

No matter where you look, you won't find a gate control. But if you take a "leap of faith" to the right when you reach the top of the ledge, you'll be rewarded with the solution. There's nothing to indicate that there's actually something on which to land, so you might ignore the possibility and spend several hours pulling out your hair while you search vainly for the illusive gate switch.

Since you'll probably find yourself dying a lot — especially early on — it's fortunate that there's a save feature, which is available from the third level on. When you reload the game after dying, the action resumes at the beginning of whatever level you had reached when you died, but that's still better than going back to the very beginning.

You can avoid death entirely if you drink special energy potions scattered throughout the dungeon, but exercise some caution with the potions you find. Some potions contain deadly poisons, so don't chug down every bottle you pick up. The poison bottles have different markings than the bottles containing energy elixir or life elixir. After a couple of permanent hangovers, you should be able to tell the difference.



You must get up that wall quickly or the gate will start closing. This isn't the main pathway, but there is an extra life bullet for you just down the corridor.

Prince of Persia is definitely a step forward in the realm of computer actions games. It's not the number of wickedly twisted puzzles that lifts it above its competition (though they certainly add to the total package) so much as it is the revolutionary, engrossing graphics. But don't get too absorbed in the graphics — remember, there's a princess waiting for you.

GP



It appears that your swordfighting could use some improvement — and soon. Keep up your defensive parry, let the enemy come to you, and then counterthrust.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for VGA or MCGA graphics); VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; supports sound boards; 8 MHz AT or faster recommended.

REVOLUTION '76

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

If, after playing a few games of *Revolution '76*, you come to the conclusion that the success of the American Revolution was something of an historic miracle, you've gotten the point.

This new **Britannica** game by historian-programmer Ed Bever (whose other gaming credits include *Conflict in Vietnam* and *Crusade in Europe*) puts you in charge of the 13 colonies at their weakest and most vulnerable moment: the day the decision was made to break irrevocably with England.



Make your Cabinet appointments wisely. You'll find it almost impossible to strike a balance between radicals and conservatives, Southerners and Northerners, but you have to try.

With no government, no constitution, no treasury, and no army save for some ill-prepared militia companies, the would-be nation is rife with sectional and ideological disharmony and has just thrown down the gauntlet to the world's foremost military power. It's hopeless, of course — and yet it worked once.... Can you make it work again?

Each game-turn represents a year's time, during which you handle all the decision making in a series of phases devoted to domestic politics, international relations, and the military situation. There is much behind-the-screens complexity in *Revolution '76*, but the on-screen format is deceptively simple and self-explanatory. It's possible to play an entire game just by looking at the screen and doing what comes naturally — but if you do, you'll miss savoring all the subtleties.

Each screen is devoted to a basic, overriding function of government, and each icon symbolizes a specific choice to be made. Click first on the person, region, or city to be affected, then click on the decision icon. A new icon, symbolizing the result of your decision, appears next to (or on top of) the person or place affected. That's about all there is to it: simple, clear, elegant — all the tricky stuff goes on behind the scenes or inside your head.



Study each man's qualities — and his politics — before making your appointments.

Most screens also have an Info icon. If you click on it after choosing the person or place to be affected, you'll get the sort of in-depth data you need to make informed decisions.

The sheer contentiousness of the era is reflected in the numerous prompting or warning screens that appear, usually just before or after you make a decision that some faction, somewhere, doesn't like (i.e., about 90 per cent of the time!). The prompt screens are, in effect, telegrams to you from someone or some group, pleading that a certain course of action be taken (or not taken) during the next phase of play.



All too often, you'll be prompted (or chided) for your actions or lack of them. You obviously can't please everybody, yet some of this unsought advice should be heeded.

These are certainly *not* disinterested suggestions, but are more like memos from some powerful lobbyist. They do not necessarily indicate the best course of action, but they do let you know that some faction has a strong interest in a particular decision. It is often wise to take such information into consideration.

Warning screens, on the



One of your most persistent headaches will be the Tory population. A carrot-and-stick approach is generally the best policy.

other hand, let you know in no uncertain terms that if you follow Policy A rather than Policy B, you're going to anger the faction issuing the warning. It is not possible to go through this game without alienating some folks, but if you anger too many too often, you'll find enthusiasm, recruitment, and revenues drying up, and Tory sentiment growing like crabgrass.

Military policy is one of the trickiest areas to master. After all, England controls the sea and can land troops — lots of them — *anywhere*. You, on the other hand, never have enough regulars to meet every threat, and the regional militia units are often more trouble than they're worth. You have to use them, however, because any region of the country that's left undefended is likely to slip into Toryism as soon as the first Redcoats land anywhere on its shores.

Battles are fought when opposing units enter the same city or region. You can assign, transfer, or sack commanders (it's fun to see how much mileage you can get out of Benedict Arnold, for example) and set military priorities, but *Revolution '76* will not — repeat, *not* — allow you to take tactical command.

The computer resolves things so all you get is a generic battle graphic and a final tally of casualties and strategic changes caused by the engagement. War-gamers will regret not being able to jump into the fray, but *Revolution '76* makes no claim to be that kind of strategic simulation. For it to zoom in suddenly on individual battles would skew what is, overall, a remarkably well-balanced system.



Your most crucial administrative decisions will, in fact, revolve around the questions of how to treat the Tories and how to tax effectively but fairly.

Production values do show a few budgetary constraints that might irk some players. The original game was designed on the Apple IIGS, and the IBM version is a rough-and-ready portage job. You get the Apple manual with an IBM insert, and you also get Apple graphics that, when compared to even the low-end of most contemporary EGA work, may strike some players as unacceptably coarse — even crude.

But if you're intrigued by the Revolutionary era, you probably won't mind its limitations. *Revolution '76* does a remarkably convincing job of simulating the fast-changing, treacherous dynamics of the age. You must confront the whole smorgasbord of problems that faced the Founding Fathers, and once you become enmeshed in the process, you can't help but gain a new respect for those gentlemen. Nor can you escape the conclusion that the Colonies were incredibly lucky to have leadership of such sagacity and moral courage.

Aside from its appeal to a sizable number of history fans, *Revolution '76* would seem to be ideal for high school — even college-level — classroom use. It is easily learned, and an average game lasts about an hour. The experience is richly educational, as well as lots of fun.

GP



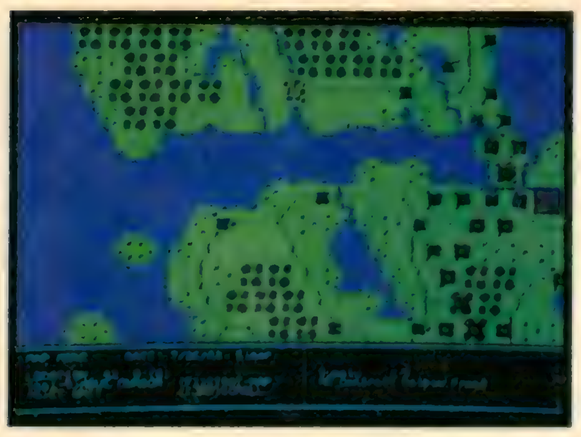
Near the end of each phase, you receive an update on what the Lobsterbacks are doing.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; EGA graphics; mouse required.

SECOND FRONT

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

In terms of scope, ferocity, and impact on the post-war world, no campaign of World War II comes close to the apocalyptic death-struggle between Hitler's *Wehrmacht* and Stalin's Red Army. Winston Churchill was not engaging in idle hyperbole when he spoke of the Red Army "tearing the guts out of the German war machine." It was a fight to the death between the biggest army on Earth and the most mechanized; between totalitarian regimes each of whose ideologies were, to a large extent, predicated on the extermination of the other; between generals who believed that superior training and technology could offset sheer numbers, and generals who did not flinch before casualty figures that would have toppled any Western government overnight.



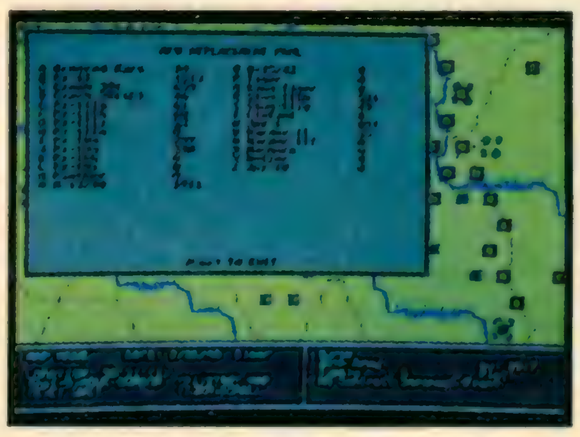
The moment of truth at Leningrad. Will you assault the city (and risk a bloodbath of casualties) or surround it as Hitler did?

It was a war whose 1200-mile front stretched from the sub-arctic fells of Lapland to the majestic peaks of the Caucasus. The ebb and flow of its campaigns was like a cycle of tidal waves, devouring hundreds of miles and reducing entire cities to smoldering heaps of rubble. In all, some 350 divisions fought on both sides with a savagery that produced more battlefield deaths in any given week than the United States suffered during the entire European campaign. Before it was over, the war on the Eastern Front would claim the lives of 20 to 30 million people.

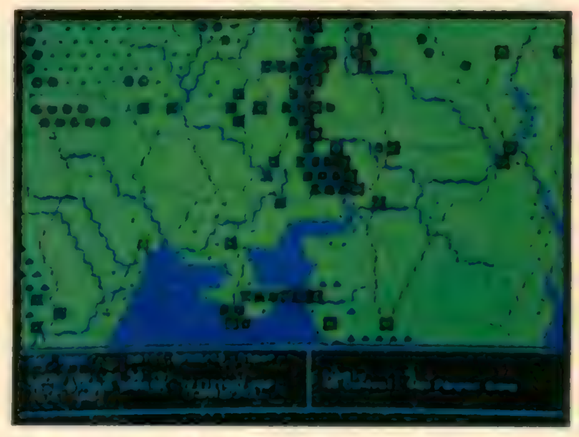
The campaign exerts a basilisk-like grip on the imaginations of war-gamers not just because of its drama, but also because a convincing case can be made that, if it had not been for Hitler's increasingly deranged interference at a number of critical moments, the German generals almost certainly could have won — with staggering consequences for future history.

Good tactical-level Eastern Front simulations abound in the PC format — both *Fire Brigade* and *Panzer Battles*, for example — but in SSI's new *Second Front*, veteran war-game designer Gary Grigsby has done something never done before in *any* format, board or computer: He has created a simulation that conveys both the epic sweep and the ask-no-quarter bloodiness of the campaign on *both* the strategic and tactical levels, and he's wrapped the whole awesome thing into a game-system that is positively hypnotic in its playability.

Second Front's map is based on an invisible hex-grid system (still, after all these years, the most satisfying system for wargaming), and depicts everything from Berlin in the east and Lake Ladoga in the north to Sevastopol and Baku in the south. Each hex represents 20 miles of terrain. An exceptionally logical system of invisible zones represents command control and supply (and a toggle key superimposes on the map all hexes that are considered "in supply" by the computer — an enormous help to the field marshal who specializes in double envelopments).



A quick glance at the AFV replacement pool shows enough Pz-IVg's to upgrade two panzer divisions. But which two, and where?



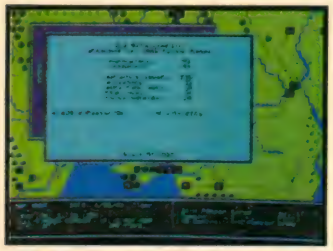
June 28, 1942: The start of the Stalingrad scenario as displayed on the strategic map.

Most game players will probably start out trying to see if they can do better than Hitler. *Second Front* goes deep in this regard, permitting you to put Germany on a "total war" footing from the beginning by assigning production priorities that insure a flow of new, improved hardware to the front, by allowing you to upgrade the equipment of mechanized and aerial units more expeditiously and rationally than Hitler's system provided for, and by allowing you to appoint commanders according to their abilities, not their sycophancy. The better the corps' commander, the less likely it is that a unit will be "shattered" by a severe enemy blow.

There are two "campaign" scenarios: The original Operation Barbarossa (starting in June, 1941), and the 1942 campaign that culminated — disastrously — in the debacle of Stalingrad. Battle scenarios include the struggle for Moscow (winter, 1941) and that for Stalingrad.

Each game-turn represents one week of real time, so if you begin one of the campaign scenarios, don't expect to finish it the same day (or even the same *week*).

The unit symbols represent corps, but a couple of simple keystrokes let you go as deep into the organizational levels as you want, to examine the experience, readiness, and equipage of individual battalions. A similarly "layered" approach has been used to show combat results: You can get a strategic read-out, which tells simply the net result in win-lose-or-draw fashion, or you can access reports down to the level of how many tanks,



It's easy to access detailed information on any unit. This division looks ready to go and can be expected to perform well in battle.

planes and gun batteries were involved and lost. The games speed by much faster at the former level, but few gamers will be able to resist watching a crucial battle develop as each division reports its losses or gains.

As supreme commander, you can also set replacement levels for each headquarters (and if you're playing on the German side, you'd do well to crank those up to 100 percent) and transfer divisions from the Italian or Western fronts. Don't overdo the latter, however. We tried gutting the reserves in France and Italy and massing about ten new corps for an all-or-nothing offensive on the Stalingrad front and succeeded in taking Stalingrad all right, only to have the computer inform us that the Allies had just staged a landing in France about two years ahead of D-Day.

There are many, many options with which you can tinker to give your chosen side an extra edge when and where it's needed, but the program *won't* allow you to distort history by giving Hitler jet aircraft two years early or Tiger tanks in 1941. You *can* do anything that was feasible according to the resources and technology available at the time, but you can't indulge in science fiction.

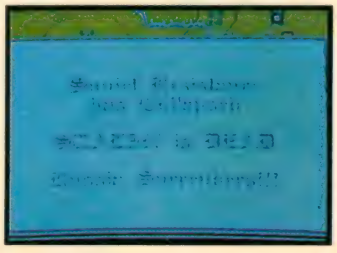
For instance: Hitler insisted that the Messerschmitt Bf-109 remain in production long after it should have been replaced by the better-armed and more durable Focke-Wolfe 190, due solely to the political influence of Willy Messerschmitt. If you elect to run the German war effort, one of your first strategic decisions should be to take your Messerschmitt plants off-line and retool them for Fw-190s, then start upgrading your fighter squadrons as soon as you can (and don't forget the Romanian and Finnish squadrons, who begin the war with obsolescent Fokkers and G-50s). Do this, and tactical air supremacy is virtually assured for the first two years.

Hitting the Alt-P key displays the current Replacement Pool, showing a tally of all new and repaired tanks and planes available during a given turn. Make a habit of upgrading the firepower and armor of even the small tank-hunter and self-propelled gun battalions attached to your infantry divisions. For the German commander, such attention to detail can spell the difference between holding on through the winter and being shattered by the repeated sledgehammer blows of the Red Army.



By placing the cursor over an HQ unit, you can mount powerful air attacks against tactical or strategic targets.

The graphics in *Second Front* are as handsome as the game-system is elegant. When the autumn rains come, the map turns a soggy brown; when winter arrives, all lakes and rivers turn white, and white shading appears on the land. And when the dreaded blizzard of '41 strikes, the entire front suddenly and dramatically appears to be covered with ice crystals.



November 8, 1942: Operation Rhinegold brings a dramatic turn of events — not to mention a drastic rearrangement of history....

Formidable in its depth, beautiful in its presentation, utterly spellbinding as a game-playing experience, *Second Front* is one of the best war games ever published for home computers. And it is, without question, *the* big Eastern Front game a lot of people have been waiting for.

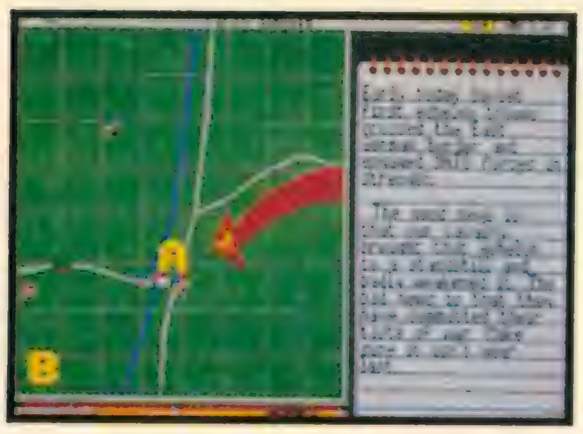
GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory for EGA graphics; 512K for CGA graphics.

TEAM YANKEE

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

There probably isn't the remotest chance now of a Warsaw Pact invasion of Germany — the classic World War III scenario — but that hardly invalidates a hypothetical showdown between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces as a fit subject for war games. The contrast between the Eastern Bloc's superior numbers and NATO's technological edge naturally leads to plenty of "what ifs" and might-have-beens. These scenarios still lend themselves to war gaming as well as ever — perhaps even more so now that much of that technology has been tested in combat in the Persian Gulf.



On the briefing screen, you'll see the basic battle plan before each engagement starts.

Team Yankee — a British simulation imported to these shores by **ReadySoft** — would at first glance seem like an exciting addition to this genre. It is based closely on the bestseller of the same name by Harold Coyle, a book distinguished for its authenticity (if not for its stick-in-the-mud prose).

In these tactical scenarios, the game player commands four armored platoons, consisting of M1-Abrams tanks, armored personnel carriers, Bradley vehicles, and a couple of self-propelled TOW launchers. By dividing one of the main screens into quadrants, the designers have made it possible for you to control, more or less simultaneously, the movements and actions of all four platoons.

At first glance, the "quadrant mode screen" looks impossibly complicated. (One editor declared it "the most cluttered screen I've seen in ages.") But this first impression turned out to be unfair. Given the game's design goals and the complex, rapidly evolving nature of modern armored battles, the command and control system of *Team Yankee* is actually rather elegant and clever. True, there's an extensive amount of documentation to digest, but once you have a clear understanding of what's what, the interface works rather well, enabling you to jump from unit to unit, from map to turret-view, in a split second.

Practice is the key, and a few turns around the training course will help immeasurably. This is one simulation that definitely demands a mouse — although other modes of control are possible, it's inconceivable that any rational person would attempt this game with a joystick or a keyboard for very long.

There are five battles and five levels of difficulty, which sounds like enough to keep dedicated tank buffs spinning their tracks for many hours. It would seem more desirable, however, to have more and different kinds of battles than to simply up the velocity and threat-level of the five basic encounters. The lack of variety is probably due to the fact that the entire simulation has been crammed onto a single 5.25" disk. Whatever the reasons for that, the compromises engendered by that limitation seem to work against the game's good intentions in other ways as well.

Graphics are adequate, but certainly nothing special. Only 16 colors are used in the game's VGA mode, and the three-dimensional effects are poky and sometimes downright disconcerting. There are a lot of forests in the game, for instance, and — as any student of elementary armored tactics knows — one of the best places to position tanks in a defensive engagement is at the edge of a wooded area, where they can see and fire without being easily detected. In this game, however, there's no "edge" to the tree line; the screen is either cov-



The "quadrant mode" screen looks impossibly cluttered but is actually quite efficient, once you get the hang of it.



Here's what a direct hit looks like—every time. If you put a round into the church behind the tank, though, you won't even see a flash.

ered with trees or it isn't. You can only estimate, from the map screen, where your optimum position ought to be, but we could discern no visible difference between being 1,000 yards into the woods and right up on the tree line. The Russian tanks, however, didn't seem to suffer from this handicap—they were able to sit invisibly behind a screen of evergreens, relentlessly picking us off from long range, while we were unable to return the compliment.

The dramatic painting on the box shows an Abrams operating with lots of air support — A-10s and Apaches — but at no time during the game do you actually get any help from the air. Before each scenario, you can designate a certain number of artillery barrages, selecting the time and place for the shells to land. But you *cannot* call for artillery support in the middle of a firefight — all you can do is guess, before the shooting starts, where the enemy might be at a given time. You can't actually see any results from those barrages, nor are you told what damage they inflicted. This little compromise in realism is both odd and frustrating.

If you shoot at a tree or a building, you don't even see an explosion, and when you shoot at a legitimate target, the explosion is small and unsatisfying. There are no tracers, either for the big gun or the machine guns.

Half of one platoon is equipped with Bradleys, whose 25mm automatic cannon is devastatingly effective against lightly armored vehicles such as the Soviet BMP-2 and BTR-60 — both of which you'll encounter frequently in these battles — but if you access that platoon, there is no icon for that weapon! You cannot shoot it! Once the Bradleys have fired their TOWs, they become about as useful as a pair of baby strollers. This is either an inexcusable lapse in design or just plain nonsense.

There's no doubting the good intentions behind *Team Yankee*, but all its purported concern for authenticity contrasts sharply with the gushy adolescent tone of the script. How, for instance, can you take a message like this seriously: "Team Bravo...has just been negated by a heavy barrage of Soviet infantry." (Have the Soviets finally perfected their deadly personnel catapults?)

And the British, for some unknown reason, remain obstinately fond of pointlessly complicated and twitchy copy-protection rituals. To play a game of *Team Yankee*, you must identify not one, not two, but *three* vehicles (out of eight shown in the manual), and at least 20 percent of the time the system refused to "let us in" even though there was no possibility of error on our part.

To add insult to injury, the program crashed mightily right in the middle of one firefight — and this was a production copy, not a Beta version.

Team Yankee is ambitious, well-intentioned, and in some respects creatively and imaginatively designed. But all in all, it is too compromised by niggling technical flaws and irritating shortcuts. That's not to say we didn't have a good enough time with some of it, when everything was working properly. And we'd like to give it another chance if and when some improvements are made.



Use the thermal imaging system to acquire targets at night and through smoke screens.

As it stands now, however, we cannot recommend *Team Yankee*. For players interested in this type of simulation, the games of choice are still *M1 Tank Platoon* (from MicroProse) for meticulously detailed authenticity, or, for sheer shoot-em-up excitement, Accolade's *Steel Thunder*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 550K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports Ad Lib sound board; supports mouse or joystick (mouse highly recommended).

TIMEQUEST

STEPHEN POOLE

Since the appearance of H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, the subject of time travel has been the basis of dozens and dozens of short stories, films, and novels, not to mention a few television shows. Why is time travel such a popular topic? Obviously, you don't have to be a historian to be enthralled with a certain place and time in the past; the idea of actually being able to see what life was like then is naturally intriguing.

But the real reason time travel is such a recurrent cultural motif is because humans love to speculate. For instance, what if the collapse of the Roman empire had never taken place? How long would feudalism have prevailed if King John had not signed the Magna Carta? Would the World War II Axis forces have been victorious had Hitler pressed forward and captured the British and French armies at Dunkirk? The urge to tweak historical variables appeals to the curiosity in almost everyone.



You may not immediately understand why you should help this girl avoid enslavement, but remember that the effects of a good deed can pay off years later.

Herein lies the fascination of *Timequest*. In this impressive role-playing puzzle adventure from **Legend Entertainment**, however, you're not out to *alter* history. Rather, it's your responsibility to insure that certain historic events transpire as they originally did. The cost of failure: an altered and unrecognizable future, and your permanent imprisonment in the past.

The game begins in the year 2090 A.D. You are a private in the Temporal Corps, which was developed to control the technology of temporal displacement — time travel. Although Temporal Corps agents journey into the future in order to determine how catastrophes and upheavals can be avoided, travel into the past is completely forbidden. The changes caused by an alteration of the past could snowball over the centuries, leading to massive disruptions of the timestream and the obliteration of history as we know it.

But the ban on travel into the past is effective only if Temporal Corps agents adhere to it, and Lieutenant Zeke Vettenmyer doesn't care too much for rules and regulations. In a fit of madness (seasoned by the aforementioned appeal of changing the course of history, perhaps?), Vettenmyer has commandeered a time-travel device, known as an Interkron, and headed out to alter ten critical events of the past.

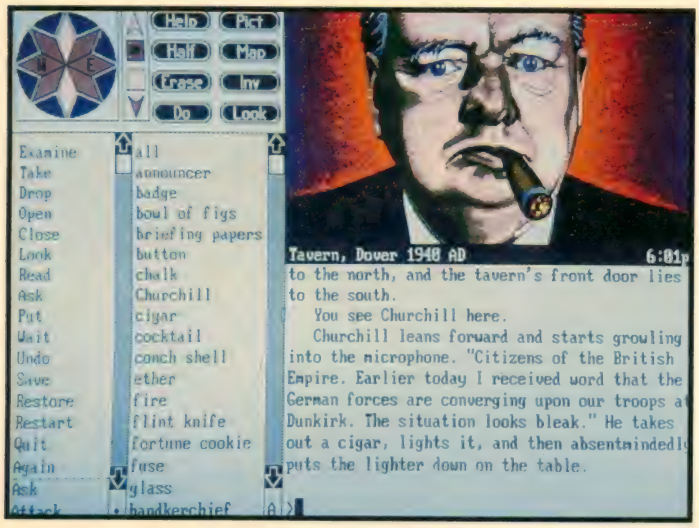
You've been given the assignment of traveling to every time and place Vettenmyer visited, determining what changes he has set in motion, then finding a way to reverse the effects of his meddling. At the start of the game, the only tools at your disposal are Vettenmyers's Interkron and a set of briefing papers outlining the events Vettenmyer has tried to alter. (Incidentally, all the information describing each of the critical events is historically accurate.)

At first you may be overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of your mission. In addition to the ten critical events he has altered, Vettenmyer also visited at least 35 other "timeplaces" — in all, there are 49 you can visit. To gather the items you need to solve the problems and to collect clues regarding Vettenmyer's whereabouts, you'll need to visit every possible destination. *Timequest* is, at its core, a detective mystery, so it's only fitting that you put in plenty of legwork.

Timequest's EGA graphics are, in a word, amazing. The



These two guards are determined to deny you an audience with Napoleon, but if you pay careful attention to the description of his headquarters, you may notice a way to "break" in.



Churchill would never dream of telling Hitler that England is prepared to surrender. You must somehow convince (or con) Churchill into uttering the code word that will lead Hitler to believe that English capitulation is at hand.

use of shading and contrast is outstanding, and the results that the artists have achieved using a 16-color palette are as good as the graphics found in many games using VGA. It really makes you wonder why EGA games of the past couldn't look this nice.

But make no mistake — *Timequest* is first and foremost a game of words, not pictures. Although the graphics (which occupy roughly a third of the screen) are colorful and evocative, their main purpose is to set the mood for the game, not visually provide you with every bit of information. Bob Bates, the author of *Timequest*, wrote text-based adventures for the now-defunct Infocom, and his roots are evident here. You may *see* a depiction of St. Peter's Basilica in the graphics window, for example, but the vendor hawking religious artifacts in front of the cathedral only appears in the text describing the scene.

Timequest can be played entirely with a mouse, but pointing and clicking on objects and menu options actually constructs commands for the game's text parser. You can click or double-click in the graphics window to receive a description of a person or thing, take an action with an object, or greet characters. Menus of verbs, prepositions, and objects can be used to build any command, and you can move from scene to scene by clicking on a compass rose. (If you don't have a mouse, you can use a combination of keys to emulate the mouse interface.)

Of course, you can still type in any game command. But even if you find it faster to type in commands than scroll through the different menus, you should refer to the lists of verbs and nouns. If you're stuck on a difficult scene, a thorough review of the available objects and possible actions can often give you a hint to the solution. And if you build questions from the menus, you're shown *every* topic you can ask a character about — a crucial advantage you don't get when typing in an inquiry.

If you have one of the several sound boards supported by *Timequest*, you'll hear an excellent sound track that adds depth to the different scenes. The RealSound effects — pounding hoofbeats, breaking glass, and trumpeting horns, to name a few —are also a treat. (There's nothing like the "scream" command to release frustration.)

The puzzles in *Timequest* vary greatly in difficulty. Saving Julius Caesar from an early demise should be a shoo-in for experienced problem-solvers, while helping the sultan Harun al-Rashid find out which of his wives is having an affair may vex even seasoned adventurers. Probably the game's most difficult puzzle comes after you've completed all ten assignments, and must locate Vettenmyer's hideout. (Hint: You'll need to write down *every* message that Vettenmyer has left behind.)



Although you have the technology of time travel at your fingertips, it's not much help when you step into this shed with a perturbed King Arthur. Take a look at everything, but don't tarry too long — Arthur has no tolerance for "demons" that appear out of nowhere.

Timequest occupies a unique position in the genre of adventure gaming, masterfully blending satisfying graphics with the challenge of a classic text-based adventure. Players who don't enjoy picking written descriptions for clues and information probably won't enjoy *Timequest*. But if you love solving a mystery, and don't mind taking the time to carefully examine every strand of evidence, *Timequest* offers a rich, rewarding, and educational gaming experience.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy graphics; requires hard disk or two floppy disk drives; supports sound cards; supports mouse (highly recommended).

WARLORDS

WILLIAM R. TROTTER

Australia's highly respected **Strategic Studies Group (SSG)** is known for inventing the "Battlefront" combat-simulation interface and applying it to a long list of distinguished games, including *Panzer Battles*, *Rommel*, and the ongoing *Decisive Battles of the American Civil War.*

In *Warlords*, SSG's designers (including such well-known game developers as Steve Fawkner and Roger Keating) have taken a holiday from historical data-crunching and produced a huge, make-believe strategy game that sprawls across a vast area and pits you against eight crafty, aggressive opponents.



Use the big map on the right for keeping track of what your enemies are doing and for planning your own strategy. The cursor changes into a magnifying glass, so you can examine any place on the map almost instantaneously.



You can change production quickly and easily. Light infantry is useful in the early stages and for garrison duty, but otherwise is just cannon fodder.

The quarrelsome land of Illuria has been held together by a ramshackle peace treaty which has just collapsed as the game begins. Each of the eight warring fiefdoms has but one objective: total domination of all the others, which means conquering *eighty* fortified cities and stomping seven opposing armies.

There are various strategic advantages and disadvantages for each of the eight armies. The Horse Lords have great mobility, for instance, while the Storm Giants — though slow to gather strength — are physically enormous. Some armies have airborne assets (such as dragons, griffins, and pegasi), and other armies have nonhuman components (such as demons, devils, and the undead).

Moreover, the terrain of Illuria is marvelously varied, with long mountain ranges pierced only by a few strategic passes, and wide rivers spanned only by a few vital bridges. Coastal cities can produce ships which have both troop-carrying and combat capabilities, thus allowing naval and amphibious tactics. There's also an economic dimension to the war: Each city produces a certain amount of revenue (trade-plus-taxes) each turn, and each unit in your army costs a certain amount to maintain. If you find yourself with a negative balance, you may have to disband some of your troops until you get more money either through pillage or by conquering another city.

All armies and corps within them can be led by heroes, who have the special ability to search out-of-the-way places (temples, ruins, etc.) for powerful artifacts that add either battle or command powers. From time to time, a hero may appear out of nowhere and offer his services — usually for a large lump-sum fee. If you can afford to, it's a good idea to hire whenever this happens — you can never have too many heroes. Also, a hero will bring some valuable allies along with him. Heroes can die, too, either in battle or while rummaging through ruins in search of artifacts and gold.

Such a multitude of variables makes for a lively game indeed. The seven fiefdoms opposing you can be made up of any combination of human or computer players. When the game starts, most of the cities in easy reach will be neutral; everybody gloms onto them first. You'll need to stop and look around, consulting your Hatred Report periodically. This report (a sub-menu) tells you how you're regarded by all the other warlords. Nobody actually *likes* you, of course (and there's nothing you can do to change that), but some will feel only "disdain" rather than "hatred" or "loathing." You'll definitely want to eliminate the more hostile opponents first, all other things being equal.

Each computerized opponent can be set to a different level of bellicosity. On the easiest level the automated enemies

tend to make cautious but relatively powerful moves, while on the most ferocious setting they'll come after you like seven different incarnations of Ghenghis Khan. On the lower settings, you can out-think the enemies quite often; on the higher settings, you barely get a chance to think at all.

Each occupied city produces certain types of units. You can produce weak units quickly and cheaply, but at certain stages in the game you'll find it worth your while to spend more time and money for the production of powerful units. If you choose to produce mostly heavy infantry, you may want to switch your coastal cities to naval production in order to gain mobility and control of the inland waterways. You can retool production priorities during any turn, as well as set destinations for newly produced units.

Combat representation is fairly pedestrian — icons square off against each other inside a screen window, and the soundtrack makes some clanking noises like swords — but the attack and defense factors can be subject to all sorts of modifiers (clearly explained in the documentation), so some fairly sophisticated tactics are possible.

Magic is factored in as a combat modifier, but there's no spellcasting as such. The wizards, dragons, and demons could be thought of as B-52s or panzer units, and should be employed when and where they'll do the most good. Although *Warlords* takes place in a fantasy land, it is *not* a fantasy role-playing game, and you never, ever, have to memorize "fireball spells" in bogus Elfish or find your way out of a dungeon maze.



Naval units take a long time to construct, but offer excellent mobility and unlimited strategic freedom.

All commands and movements are issued with a simple point-and-click interface, and there's a lovely strategic map visible at all times to make your generalship a relatively uncomplicated process. The graphics are colorful and charming.

The interface is *so* easy, in fact, that a word of caution is in order: If you've clicked on a unit in order to move it, remember to click again before moving the cursor over to the map. Otherwise, the movement mode will still be active when you move the cursor back to the tactical part of the screen and your unit will suddenly zoom off in any old direction. And once you move a unit, there's no taking it back until next turn. At best, this can be an aggravation, and in some cases it can spell disaster.

It doesn't take much time to learn the basic rules (the game's tutorial does a nice job of covering them), and the many fine wrinkles and small features become obvious as you play.

Warlords may be easy to learn, but it's a big game indeed. Some campaigns will spread out over two or three days before a winner begins to emerge.

After a few fairly slow turns at the start, in which everybody pillages neutral cities and decides whom to invade first, the games tend to pick up great speed and to become elaborate and sometimes unpredictable.

Warlords is simple to learn, great bloodthirsty fun to play, and as addictive as *Empire*. Despite its fantasy trappings, it's a classic game of grand strategy, designed by veteran gamesters who really knew what they were doing.

GP

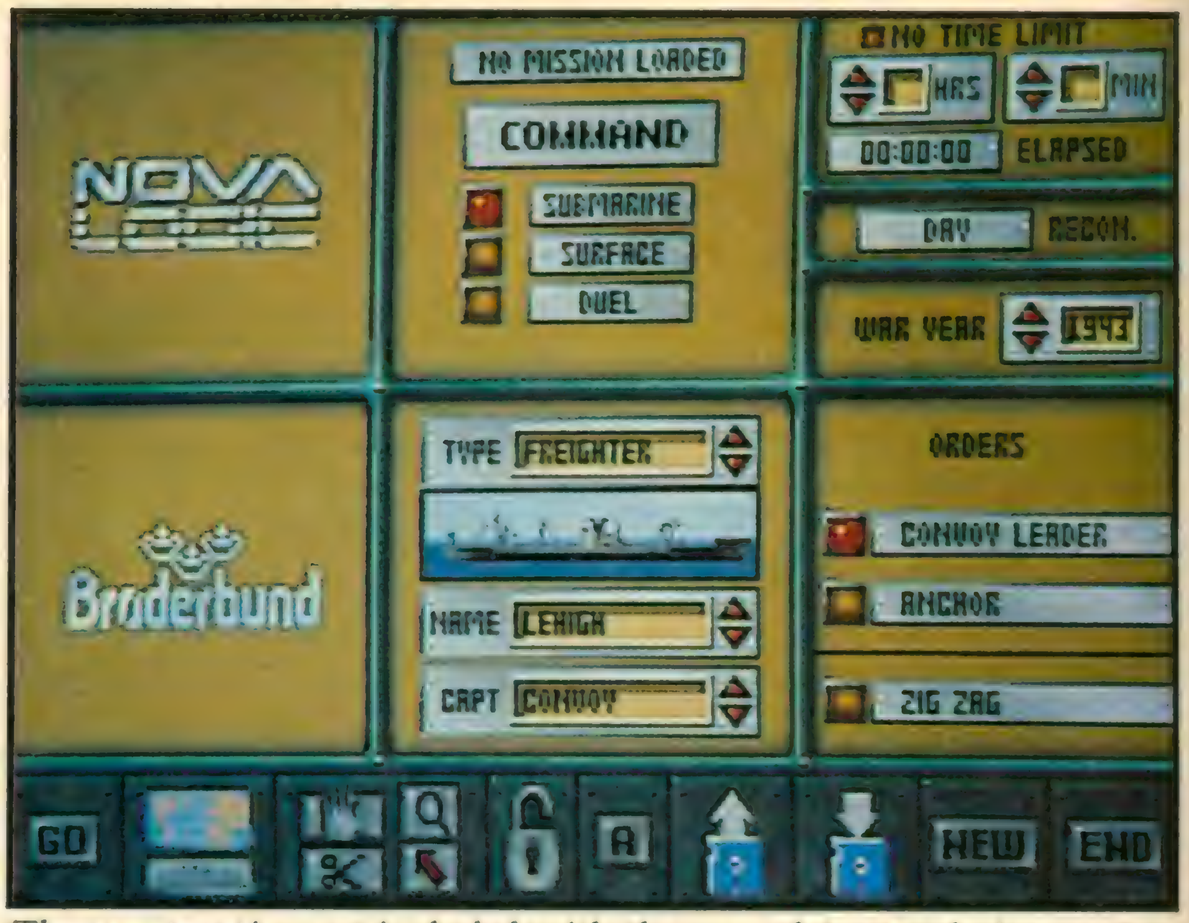


From the pull-down menus, you can access a number of graphs that show how you compare to your rivals.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; mouse and hard drive recommended.

WOLFPACK

WILLIAM R. TROTTER



The construction set included with the game lets you design custom battles in five different parts of the Atlantic.

"The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war," said Winston Churchill in his memoirs, "was the U-boat peril." You can understand his concern, for in 1942, at the height of the Germans' unrestricted submarine campaign, Allied merchant ships were being sunk faster than they were being built and England was on the verge of starvation.

Close-run battles make for the best computer simulations, and **Broderbund's** new *WolfPack* does a good job of capturing the drama of this epic struggle. There are a number of good submarine simulations on the market, of course, but most of the newer ones are high-tech variations on the *Red October* theme, and the World War II simulations — most notably MicroProse's *Silent Service* — focus on American missions in the Pacific Theater. *WolfPack* is the first mass-market game to simulate subs-versus-convoy actions in the Battle of the Atlantic.



The action-packed graphics in WolfPack *are exceptionally realistic.*

It does so with remarkable fidelity to its subject and unprecedented role-playing virtuosity, allowing you to control *either* side. As the wolfpack's commander, you can stalk convoys of various kinds in several different geographical regions and periods of the war. Later, you can replay the same types of scenarios in command of the surface fleet.

You can load a dozen out-of-the-box scenarios or — once you're familiar with the game — you can use the construction program to generate dozens of new missions. Among the more interesting options are the "duel" scenarios, in which you command one side and a friend takes the other. You can set your own time limit for duels and the computer will generate a proper number of sequential turns. These can be pretty intense contests, often reminiscent of the classic submarine warfare film *The Enemy Below.*

If you're the wolfpack commander, you should first review (via the strategic chart) the existing patrol paths of your pig-boats. You can jump in and modify them at any point, and after a bit of practice, you'll find yourself "orchestrating" your boats' actions in classic wolfpack style. Ideally, you should try to figure out the heading of your targets, then group your subs so they will lie submerged across the convoy's path.

Take advantage of the fact that a surfaced U-boat could move two or three times faster than the average convoy (the overall progress of which was limited to the speed of the slowest vessel), but only if it's dark or you're safely out of radar range.

As surface commander, your job is to *protect* the convoy — not go chasing all over the ocean for U-boat kills. You should plot a course that lets you reach your destination on time and with minimum losses. You decide the route, the escorts' formation, and the amount of zig-zagging.



You can also command the convoy's escort against the computer or a human opponent. Battles in WolfPack *tend to become intensely personal duels.*



You can handle emergency damage control at sea, but for supplies you must either return to base or rendezvous with a "milch cow" sub.



When a destroyer turns bow-on to your periscope, fire a down-the-throat spread of torpedoes, and then crash dive.



Nighttime scenes are beautifully rendered; the use of color throughout this game is especially subtle and effective.

For sub combat, you'll have depth charges, hedgehogs (after 1942), and cannons. You must also master specialized tactics, such as "sprint and drift" — cutting engine power in order to listen on your hydrophones.

The pre-set scenarios cover just about every type of action characteristic of the North Atlantic campaign. There are two easy practice battles and ten much tougher actions set in the Bay of Biscay, the Caribbean, the choke-point of the Straits of Gibraltar, and the mid-ocean vastness of the Atlantic. Some missions are set in the earliest months of the war (called "the happy time" by U-boat crews), when Allied escorts were few and targets were ripe. Others — perhaps the most interesting of all — are turning-point battles from the mid-1943 period, when the U-boats' expertise was evenly balanced against the Allies' technology and growing numbers.

While Broderbund's EGA graphics are certainly good enough to permit full enjoyment of the game, the program takes a quantum leap in realism when viewed in the VGA mode. The textures of water and steel become almost tactile; torpedo explosions look fearsomely authentic and wounded ships slide into the depths wreathed in coiling smoke and licking tongues of fire.

A good soundboard also adds considerable extra realism: the eerie *ping* of sonar, the *whoosh* of torpedoes leaving their tubes, the splash and subsequent *crump* of depth charges ... these and numerous other sound effects generate a very convincing sense of atmosphere.



After each engagement, your performance is critiqued — none too gently — by the computer.

Broderbund's manual is well illustrated and thorough, but the prose is curiously tentative when it should be crisp and decisive. It's as though the writer(s) were not really comfortable with the subject matter. And there is a whopping historical error on page 75. The silhouette of an Allied escort ship shown there is identified as a "Fletcher-type destroyer" whose secondary battery was comprised of "four 1.1-inch guns."



If you're forced to the surface, you can still fight with your deck gun ... but probably not for long.

But the vessel shown is actually a Buckley-class destroyer escort and looks nothing like the larger Fletcher-class DDs. And after the start of 1942, not a single U.S. warship was configured for the obsolete and ineffective 1.1-inch guns (nicknamed "Chicago Pianos" in a now-obscure reference to the gangster films of the 1930s). The 1.1-inch guns were replaced by the more powerful Bofors 40-mm. and Oerlikon 20-mm. weapons, updated versions of which remain in service to this day.

Fortunately, the game designers did their homework more effectively than the manual-writers. *WolfPack* merits an Iron Cross, first class, for its realism and intensity.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy 16-color, or Hercules graphics; joystick and mouse optional; supports sound boards.



ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

COME FLY WITH ME



In the early missions, you board a bronze dragon. Later, other dragons take this one's place.

Although this column deals with role-playing games and *DragonStrike* isn't one, this game will interest so many fans of the genre that we wanted to review it here. It certainly could be called an alternate life experience.

Quite simply, *DragonStrike* is a flight simulator. But instead of flying an F-18 jet or a propeller-driven Cessna, you mount a mythical dragon. Now, obviously, this idea isn't exactly "simulation" becase it doesn't attempt to duplicate reality. But within those limits (and what are computers if not ways of erasing limits?), *DragonStrike* does a creditable and enjoyable job.

In this unusual game, you play the role of young, eager, inexperienced knight of the Solamnic Order of the Crown. Like *Champions of Krynn*, also from SSI, *DragonStrike* operates in the popular fictional world of DragonLance, except that here you are part of the aerial battle you only hear about in the other game. The realm of Ansalon has been all but overrun by the evil dragon armies, and only one good army stands between them and total conquest. You are part of that army, of course, and you have been recruited as a dragon rider. Your goal, essentially, is to keep the skies clear of dragons so your armies can oppose the bad guys.

To fulfill your quest, you must successfully complete 22 separate missions. Periodically, you'll be given a new rank, and, less frequently, a more powerful dragon to ride. You can remain as a Knight of the Crown for the entire game, rising in rank toward Lord Warrior, or you can transfer to the Order of the Sword and/or the Order of the Rose. The highest rank in the Order of the Sword is Lord Clerist, while masters of the Order of the Rose are called High Justices. Actually, becoming a Knight of the Rose is the only way to ride the two gold dragons, so it's to your advantage to switch early. But your missions will be more dangerous in this order.

You begin the game by mounting Sirdar, the old bronze dragon, and riding him into battle against two evil white dragon scouts. If you fly well, this will be a quick battle. The whites are unsophisticated and fairly weak, and succumb quickly to Sirdar's breath weapons of lightning and repulsion gas. In a tight spot, you can also spear the dragons with your lance.

In time, you're offered Adamant, an older, larger, more powerful bronze dragon. Continue through the ranks, and you'll get to know Argent, a silver dragon whose breath weapons are Paralyzation and the Cone of Cold. Past Argent is Ulaina, the female silver dragon who can climb into the skies much like an F-18. Then come the two gold dragons, Dolce and Thew. Thew, with his Cone of Fire and Chlorine Gas breath weapons, suffers only mounts of the highest ranks, but his skill is worth the effort.

Once past the white scouts, you must take on a group of wyverns atop the cliffs of Cristyne. Immediately you're against a different class of enemy—these beasts are far more



This colorful map shows the extent of the strategic problem. Each red dragon represents an evil army, while a solitary good army opposes them.

maneuverable than the whites. Often you can see them behind you rather than in front.

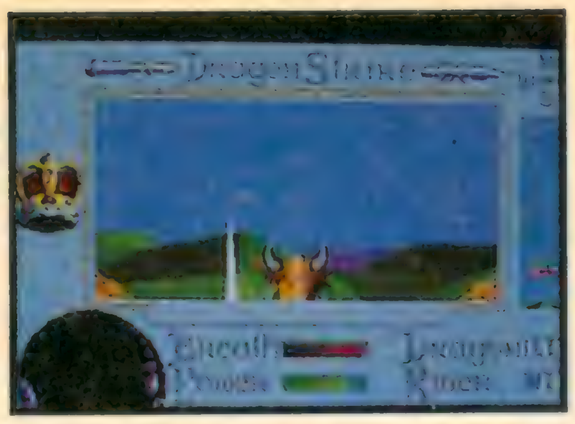
The next mission pits you against an acid-slinging black dragon, after which you must recover some valuable artifacts and decide whether or not to join the Order of the Sword. Later missions put you in deadly combat against a host of blue dragons, a large group of different kinds of dragons, a flying citadel, a black dragon highlord, and finally the powerful and terrifying red dragons.

Most of *DragonStrike* is played from the main screen. From here you have a dragon's-eye view, with the dragon's head and your lance appearing in front of you. This screen shows you your dragon's speed, power, and availability of breath weapons. It also gives your remaining hit points and offers an arrow and a crystal ball (i.e., radar) to point you towards your foes.

The quality of the graphics on this screen naturally depends on the capabilities of your PC. Those with color VGA and AT-class machines or higher will enjoy considerable graphic detail. Those with less capable machines can choose to eliminate the dragonlance graphic and replace it with a crosshairs target sight; reduce the enemy dragons from bitmap drawings



This is the standard DragonStrike *screen. From here you can see your speed and power, the availability of breath weapons, and the hit points you and your dragon have left.*



Two white dragons are directly ahead. Speed up and catch them, then destroy them with your lance or your dragon's breath weapon.

to polygon shapes; and change the many shapes from solid polygons to wireframe polygons.

The game is equally playable no matter which graphics mode you choose, so there's no point hindering your progress by selecting graphics that make your computer work too hard. These options, though, like much else in *DragonStrike*, demonstrate a very encouraging concern for customer preferences.

To play the game, you simply maneuver your dragon into position and use its breath weapons or your dragonlance to fight. Each dragon has two breath weapons, accessible from the keyboard or from joystick or mouse buttons. You must use breath weapons to attack soldiers on the ground or ships in the sea. Use the breath weapons with care, however — your dragon takes some time to recharge after using one.

In close combat, you can use your lance. Of course, the enemy dragons can also use their teeth and claws (as can yours), so it's hardly a picnic. If you or your dragon are hit, you could fall toward the ground. Unless you've found the featherfall ring, your only hope is that your dragon will swoop down and catch you before you hit the ground.

To maneuver your dragon, you must make good use of speed, height and pitch, and banking. In addition, you must learn to use the side and rear views since your enemy isn't always directly in front of you. Pressing the "A" key speeds you up, and pressing "S" slows you down. The dragon also speeds up when you dive. Height is equally important because enemy dragons attempt to descend from above, and you must try to do the same to them. Each time you bank you risk losing speed and altitude.

Your dragon also needs to rest occasionally. Gliding gradually restores its power and also makes your mount more maneuverable. You can land the dragon, too, but in general doing so is not a good idea; these beasts don't appreciate the physical exertion required to take off again.



The preferences screen lets you adjust graphic detail and other important play considerations.

DragonStrike is a game whose time has come. As far as role playing goes, officially you're simply trying to increase in rank the way you do in an air force simulation. But there's more to the role-playing element that just that. One of the problems with fantasy role playing is that most encounters occur in words on the screen rather than in high-quality animation as seen from a first-person perspective.

DragonStrike offers us a rare glimpse of what one design team thinks mounting a dragon would really be like. Now if we could only get similar first-person perspective games involving battling sea monsters and undead creatures, combine them with first-person perspective in which we interact with high magicians and exotic deities, and then feed them all back into a top-notch role-playing system — the entire role-playing industry would be both changed and improved dramatically. The potential is enormous.



As you approach the enemy dragons, you must ready your lance and your breath weapons.

GP



VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY?



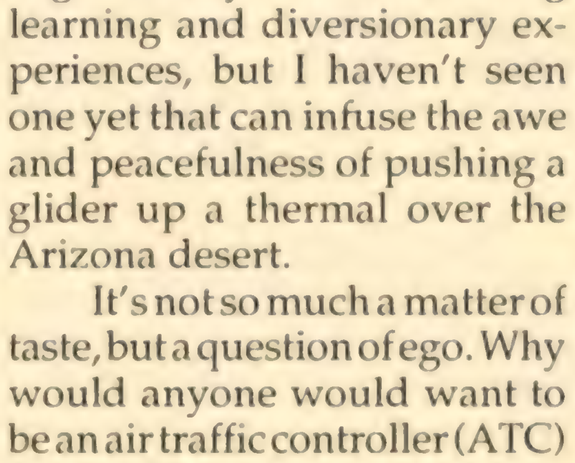
It's another close call in sky over the Los Angeles TRACON sector. If L.A.'s hectic pace isn't your style, you can select Boston, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, or Seattle. Add-on sector packs that cover other areas of the U.S. are available separately.

A few months ago in this column, Selby Bateman mentioned his experiences with a Commodore 64 version of an air traffic control simulation. Selby wondered (quite aptly) why anyone would want to spend time with a simulation that demands such intense concentration and produces almost as much stress as the real thing. As in real life, the endurance of stress within a game should be balanced by an intellectual or emotionally satisfying reward.

Truly successful simulations allow the player to experience both the mechanical and emotional aspects of an activity that would normally be unavailable or difficult to experience within the structure of the player's real-life world. A simulation that fails to recreate the actual emotive component of the process being modeled is fundamentally incomplete.

Flight simulators, despite their widespread popularity, consistently fail to capture any of the exhilarative joy of free flight. They are interesting learning and diversionary experiences, but I haven't seen one yet that can infuse the awe and peacefulness of pushing a glider up a thermal over the Arizona desert.

It's not so much a matter of taste, but a question of ego. Why would anyone would want to be an air traffic controller (ATC) in the first place? ATC work pays fairly well, but the burnout rate and high stress involved are hardly attractive. The bottom line is that less than one quarter of one percent of the general populace is capable of the abstract logic and control required to make it as an ATC.



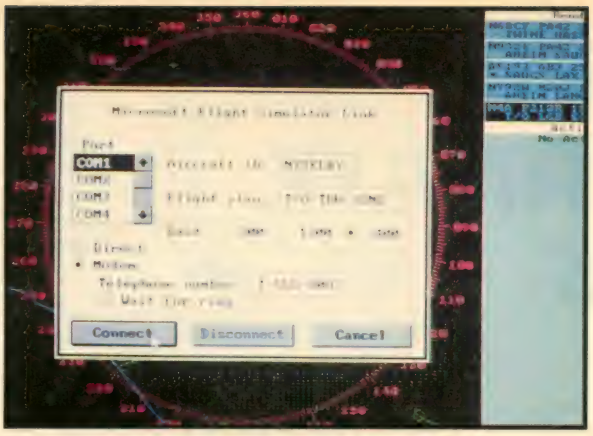
Don't ask your airborne charges to write any checks their performance envelopes can't cash. If your memory needs a kick, the specs of any plane on the scope can be immediately brought to bear.

Within their zones of control, air traffic controllers are accorded senior deity status. Your minions may exercise free will in their choice of destinations, but you maintain absolute authority and control over how (and if) they get there. Maybe one doesn't have to aspire to godhead to enjoy actual or simulated air traffic control, but according to senior instructors at the FAA's ATC school, it certainly helps.

Wesson International's *TRACON II* succeeds on multiple levels as an ATC simulation. It successfully presents the fundamentals and personal intensity of air traffic control. Even if you never gain proficiency at handling heavy air traffic, the insight it provides into how the world's airways are managed is fascinating in its own right.

There are three types of air traffic controllers. "Tower" controllers handle takeoffs and

landings at airports. "Center" controllers typically handle aircraft that only fly through a given sector. "TRACON" (Terminal Radar Approach CONtrol) controllers have to direct aircraft to be "handed off" to tower controllers, clear departing aircraft for takeoff, and handle overflights between center controller sectors as well. Being a TRACON ATC offers the widest variety of tasks, but is also the most complex and demanding type of ATC work.



TRACON II's *multi-player feature allows other PCs running* Microsoft Flight Simulator *(3.0 or higher) to join in the fracas and be directed through your airspace with the rest of the traffic. One flyer per serial port on your PC is supported via modem or direct connection.*

As a TRACON controller, you are responsible for all of the air traffic in your sector from ground level up to 12,000 feet. Keeping aircraft separated to prevent midair collisions is the order of the day, and the fundamental rules are deceptively simple. Aircraft at the same altitude must be separated by at least three miles. Aircraft that are not separated by three miles must be separated by at least 1,000 feet in altitude.

It may sound simple enough, but keep in mind that airplanes leaving and arriving at an airport often need to gain or reduce altitude. And every aircraft you handle has a flight plan that dictates their ultimate destination.

TRACON II's display is divided into four primary areas. A realistic radarscope of your sector of control occupies most of the screen (and your attention). A variety of options allows you to customize the appearance and amount of information displayed on the scope to suit your level of ATC expertise.

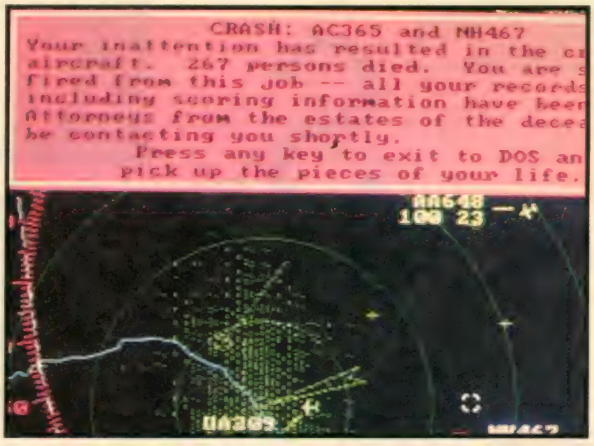
"Tags" associated with each radar contact identify each aircraft's call sign, altitude, and speed. Commands may be issued to planes using keyboard entry or a mouse. The commands and pilot acknowledgments appear under the radar scope. The commands given and executed may also be echoed by a digitized voice through your computer's internal speaker. The sound is a bit scratchy but is easy enough to understand after you get used to it.

To the right of the radarscope are "flight strips" for pending and active aircraft. Planes waiting to take off or enter your sector show up first in the pending area. When you accept control over them they become actives. The flight strips provide, in abbreviated format, the flight plan for each plane.

Since *TRACON II* executes in real-time, there are occasional lulls between periods of peak activity. A "skip" key, which jumps things ahead seven seconds, can be used to move quickly ahead. With a few hours of practice, I was able to handle 15 to 20 planes in as many minutes under perfect conditions, and rack up scores close enough to the theoretical maximum to push my hat size up a few notches.

In a perfect world, air traffic is fairly light, the weather is great, pilots under your aegis never make mistakes, emergencies never occur, and your equipment is 100 percent reliable. Once you've got the basics down, *TRACON II* lets you vary those scenario parameters to approximate real life more closely, or even to create your own personal vision of ATC Hell. A few minutes of handling multiple maydays while incompetent pilots blundered through heavy thunderstorms was enough to bring my pride (and a Lear Jet and 747) embarrassingly back down to earth.

Wesson International markets several accessories for dedicated *TRACON II* fans. For $60 you can markedly improve the fidelity of spoken ground/air communication with an add-on external speaker that uses special hardware and voice drivers. And true fanatics won't even flinch at the thought of plunking down $350 for a speech recognition system that frees you from mouse and/or keyboard input altogether.



Fall alseep at the wheel during heavy weather and you're likely to be the cause of an international air disaster. You can bet that this wasn't the type of merger Air Canada and Nippon Air had in mind.

TRACON II may be stressful, but the emotional payoff it offers is uniquely satisfying and quite different from any other computer simulation I've experienced. I may not be able to cope with emulsifying a horde of fast-moving slimy aliens any more, but I can handle bringing in a DC-8 with hydraulic failure through rough weather and a crowded sky with the best of them.

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ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

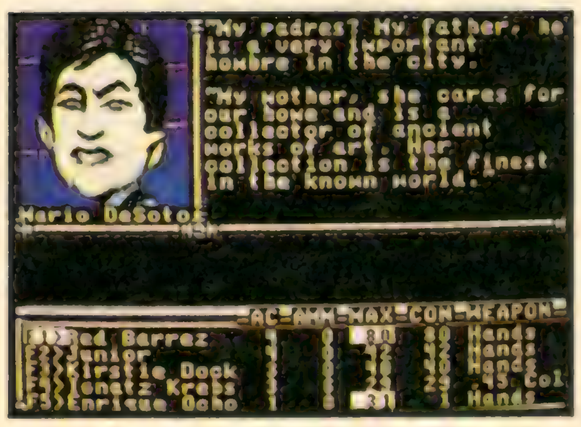
ON THE (MIAMI) BEACH



Greetings from Miami? Yeah, sure. You're more likely to meet the unattractive man on the right than the young lovelies with him.

Several years ago, *Wasteland* was one of the first computer role-playing games (RPGs) to deal with the popular science-fiction theme of post-holocaust America. The game demonstrated the violence, the mutations, and the weirdness that would accompany any society trying to survive after the bombs fell.

Bad Blood took a highly playable fantasy RPG system and dropped it into a post-holocaust world. It, too, was dominated by bizarre mutants and chaos, but was more accessible to players than *Wasteland*.



A chance encounter with Mario DeSoto can produce some interesting results. Be careful, though — he's an important character.

Now comes *Fountain of Dreams*. Like *Wasteland* and *Bad Blood*, this Electronic Arts game is set after World War III. It too has its fair share of weirdness. But *Fountain of Dreams* surpasses *Wasteland* because it takes full advantage of the recent advances in RPG playability. It's as accessible as *Bad Blood*, but in almost all other ways *Bad Blood* and *Fountain of Dreams* are too different to be compared — for one thing, *Fountain of Dreams* shows a great sense of humor.

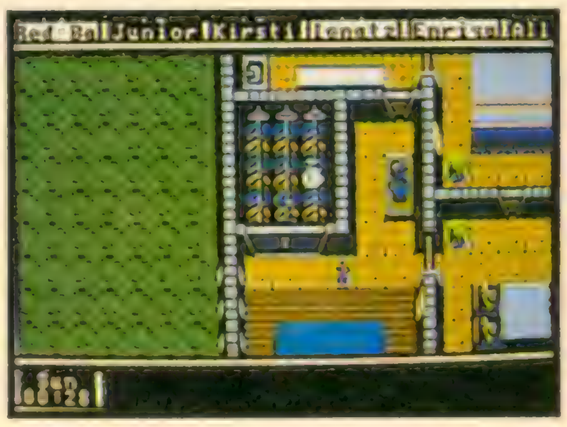


The whole party chooses to attack this dobermutant. Its bite might cause mutation.

Picture Florida as an island after the holocaust, separated from the U.S. mainland by the seismic backlash that followed nuclear hits on Georgia. The Sunshine State escaped total demolition because the attackers wished to keep Cape Canaveral operational for their own purposes. Organic life was decimated by chemical weapons and neutron bombs, but the land remained.

Within 50 years, Florida became a series of city-states — different communities, each considering its own survival to be paramount. Miami has split into several factions. The Miami Police division is lead by that pastel-clad duo, Tockett and Crubbs. Other groups include the bootlegging DeSoto family, the punk-ridden Bahia Mafia, and the voodoo-inspired Obeah Orders. Less organized, but always spoiling for a fight, are the Beachcombers, whose philosophy is to get through each day alive.

Despite Florida's dismal condition, rumors continue to circulate about the Dream Water that can be found somewhere on the island. Not unlike Ponce de Leon's Fountain of Youth, Dream Water is said to have the power to cleanse mu-



You know that there's a moneybag inside a closet in the DeSoto house, but picking it up may be dangerous — unless you're willing to risk rat bites.



Now these guys are ugly — and dangerous, too. Still, they're not only beatable, but usually have treasure as well.

tations. Your quest in *Fountain of Dreams* is to find the source of the Dream Water and use it to clean up Florida. It won't be easy: The fountain is supposedly hidden deep within the treacherous Everglades, guarded by mutated animals of near-human intelligence.

Players familiar with Interplay's *Dragon Wars* will recognize the basis of the *Fountain of Dreams* system. Like *Dragon Wars*, *Fountain of Dreams* is extremely easy to learn. You create characters at the beginning of the game, customizing them by choosing an identity for each — survivalist, vigilante, medic, hood, or mechanic — and adjusting attributes with bonus points. Your party consists of one to three characters, and you recruit others throughout the game until your party includes five members.

Survivalists begin the game with pharmacy and mechanics as active skills, and stealth, firearm handling, and gunsmithing as passive skills. By comparison, hoods begin with lockpicking as an active skill and stealth and firearm handling as passive skills; medics have active medical skills and passive perception and swordsmanship skills; and mechanics and vigilantes have similarly appropriate skills. Active skills must be deliberately attempted whenever the situation is appropriate, while passive skills kick in automatically whenever they're needed.

The beauty of *Fountain of Dreams* lies in its interface. The attributes of the characters — strength, dexterity, charisma, willpower, I.Q., aptitude, and luck — are directly tied to the skills with which characters begin the game. As you adventure, you gain experience points (mostly in combat) and rise in rank. And whenever your rank increases, you gain two bonus points to add to your cumulative attributes.

Both active and passive skills increase as your character uses them, and, like attribute increases, they take effect immediately. In other words, there's no "training session," as in most RPGs. You use your skills and they get better. No muss, no fuss.



Following a battle on the Miami streets, a bag of treasure lies waiting for you. Walk towards it and see what it offers.

The only downside here lies in the distribution of experience points. Money in *Fountain of Dreams* is automatically shared by the party, but, for some reason, experience points aren't. Only the character delivering the final blow receives experience points for destroying an enemy — even if another character has done most of the work. This means that only your best fighters collect the vast majority of the experience points for fighting.

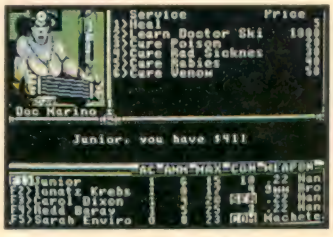
Fountain of Dreams doesn't offer a first-person perspective. Instead, you move the Party icon around an overhead map of either the entire island or, more often, closeups of particular locations. The scale of the map changes frequently, depending on where you are. Enter Miami, for instance, and you walk down streets — enter buildings (or the DeSoto compound), and the scale drops to the size of individual rooms. No mapping is necessary — a relief to many RPG players.

There are many characters on the island who will join your party if asked. In fact, you can drop one character in favor of another. You may "store" these nonessential characters in your home compound or in other, hidden places, but be sure to remember where you put them.

The most controversial design element of *Fountain of Dreams* is that the game changes automatically — and permanently — as you play. Although you can save your progress manually, the game saves itself at important places. So there are no experiments in *Fountain of Dreams*, no fun kamikaze maneuvers just to see what happens — because you may not be able to restore the game from the point where you last saved it. Instead, you may find yourself already enmeshed in your badly thought-out experiment.

OK, this system may be more like real life, and fortunately there *are* places (such as the Pit) where you can get out of a sticky situation by rebooting. But if you really want to save a game, the best thing to do is copy the entire game to a subdirectory or another disk.

Fountain of Dreams is a strong entry in the new style of computer RPGs. These games, which include *Dragon Wars* and *Dark Heart of Uukrull*, are easy to learn, but still take a long time to complete. They also require a commitment from their players — not a commitment of time, necessarily, but a commitment to irrevocable action. So forget experimentation, and stick to the decisions you must make in order to survive.



You can be healed in the doctor's clinic, and, if you're good enough, he'll even teach you how to be a medic. It all costs money, but he's one of the good guys.

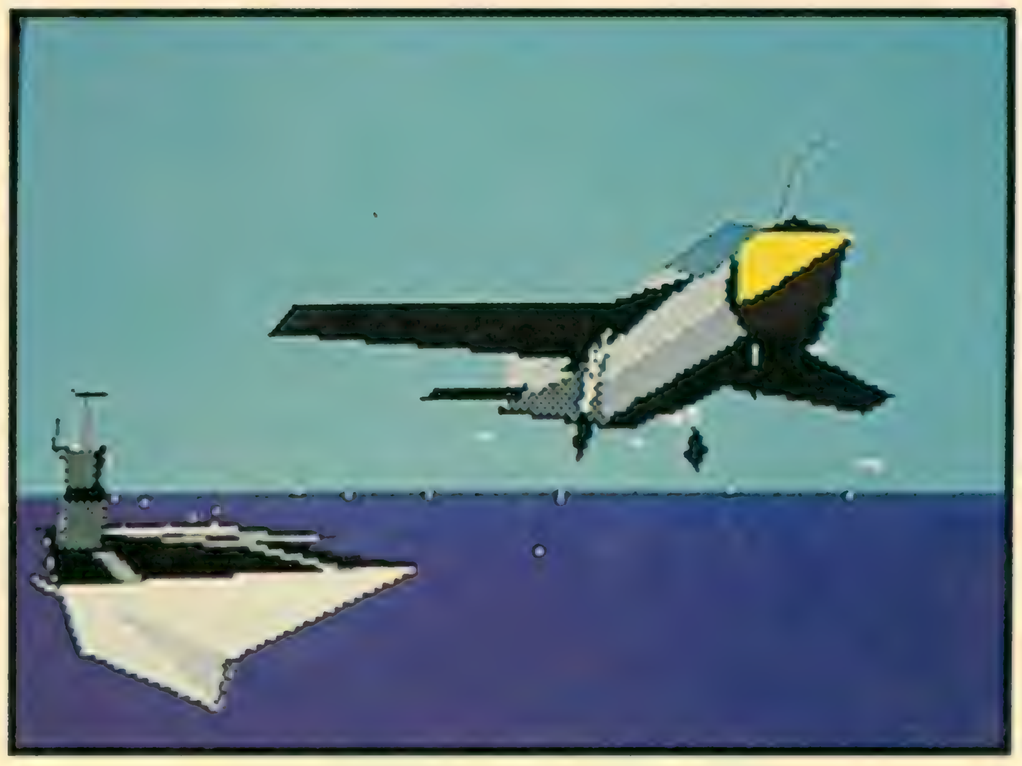
GP



VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

PARDON THE INTRUSION



Carrier takeoffs and landings can prove your mettle as a pilot.

It's four in the morning, and a local radio talk show is rife with callers arguing the merits of U.S. military involvement in the Persian Gulf. In the space of an hour, the listeners have run the gamut from "nuke 'em" to "get out now." The show's guest, a military analyst, remarks in passing that most people in the United States are under the mistaken impression that an armed conflict in the Gulf would be swift and decisive, like Grenada or Panama. Does anyone else have deja vu?

Spectrum HoloByte's *Flight of the Intruder*, based on the Stephen Coonts bestseller of the same name, is an aerial combat simulation that goes far beyond the ordinary armchair-general grind that has flooded the market lately. Besides being a multi-faceted simulation of Navy air operations during the Vietnam War, *Intruder* provides a wealth of insights into the difficulties faced by U.S. naval flyers during "limited" conflicts.

Flight of the Intruder is set aboard an aircraft carrier off the coast of North Vietnam in 1972. The object of the simulation seems straightforward enough: to complete assigned air combat missions with minimum losses of equipment and personnel.

Although I'm notoriously ham-fisted when it comes to jet-jockeying, I had little difficulty with *Intruder's* aircraft as I took to the air as my choice of fighter or bomber pilot. Taking off from the carrier, flying, and navigation are easy enough for beginners, and a short section on aerial combat tricks and maneuvers in the manual imparts enough useful information to brace you for dealing with enemy MiGs and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs).

It may surprise experienced air simulation players that the keyboard is better for commands than a joystick or mouse. At the lower levels of flight proficiency, the aircraft is relatively forgiving. But getting back to home base is another matter altogether.

As Coonts recalls in his book, the act of landing on an aircraft carrier is little more than a controlled crash. You may have to rely on your craft's autopilot frequently during your carrier landing approaches to keep from littering the ocean and flight deck with pieces of your plane.

Intruder has all of the niceties you can expect from advanced flight simulations. There are multiple views of the action, and a video option that can be turned on in mid-flight, allowing you to replay critical portions of your flight after the mission. Or if you have a fellow aviator with his or her own computer, multi-player games can be played via modem or

direct cable to your computer's serial port.

Spectrum HoloByte recommends using a turbo XT as a minimal hardware platform for *Intruder*. Right. XT owners are advised to limit the amount of surface detail rendered to keep things crawling semi-smoothly. If you want to use *Intruder's* digitized sound effects or an Ad-Lib compatible sound card, you'll need a 12 Mhz AT or better. *Intruder* does makes good use of VGA and EGA color graphics, and CGA mode is also offered.

Once the basics of flight are mastered, you're free to assume the headaches of the CAG (Commander Air Group) of a carrier-based group of F-4 Phantom fighters and A-6 Intruder bombers. A number of life-threatening operations are provided. Since it's your funeral, you're also free to plan, create, and orchestrate operations of your own.

Each operation can consist of up to four missions, with each mission assigned to a pair of aircraft. In a single operation, for example, one group of Phantoms can be assigned to provide air cover over the carrier, while another group acts as an escort for two flights of bombers, each flight having separate targets.

The CAG can fly any of the aircraft involved in a mission and can actually switch planes in mid-mission—which allows the gung-ho to be always in the thick of the action. For example, on one mission I took off in an Intruder, switched over to a Phantom (which was providing cover) to dogfight with enemy incomings, hopped back to the Intruder to make the bomb run, and then went back to a Phantom for a quick run to the 7-11 (I needed a cup of coffee).

Intruder has so much depth that the number of options and controls provided may seem somewhat bewildering at first. Fortunately, a paperback copy of Coonts's novel is included with the simulation. While it may take several days to read the book, doing so provides a solid base for understanding the mechanics of the job at hand — and it relieves much of the pain associated with familiarizing yourself with a bewildering array of military acronyms and slang.



Missions over North Vietnam can be extremely tense.

The book does have one intriguing aspect that is lacking in the simulation. A number of missions in the book take place at night, an option which *Intruder*, regrettably, doesn't support.

During any armed conflict, the options available to U.S. pilots may be restricted by "Rules of Engagement." For maximum realism, you can play *Intruder* under the same rules that were in effect for much of the Vietnam War. Once those rules are invoked, *Intruder* sheds what little "take to the skies and blast 'em" character it has and turns into a tense conflict management.

You fly and fight under the same restrictions that crippled naval fliers in the Vietnam campaign. MiGs can be attacked only when they are airborne and have been visually identified as unfriendlies. Only those targets assigned prior to takeoff can be attacked. No "targets of opportunity" may be struck. Anti-aircraft, SAM, and ground-control radar installations may not be shot at unless their radar has "pinged" you.

Flight of the Intruder does not glorify war. Instead, it instills a much deeper understanding of the difficulties and frustrations experienced by U.S. aviators during a time that tried the will and conscience of a nation. Like the Vietnam War, *Flight of the Intruder* offers no final resolution of conflict. Perhaps therein lies its message.

GP



Your A-6 Intruder is equipped with Heads-Up Display targeting.



ALTERNATE LIVES

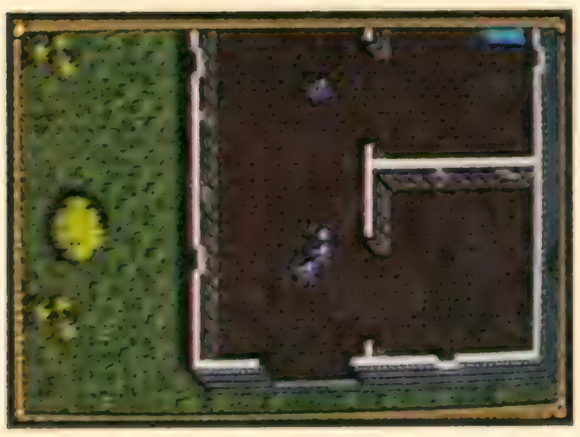
NEIL RANDALL

LORD OF THE RINGS: LABOR OF LOVE



In the game's introduction, the first part of the novel is outlined. Here, Gandalf begins his explanation of the importance of the ring.

Without a doubt, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is the basis for the popularity of modern fantasy, both in fiction and in role-playing games (RPG's). Drawing on myths, legends, folklore, and his own vivid imagination, Tolkien created a fantasy world that people could easily care about. Tolkien's work inspired a host of imitations in both the literary and gaming worlds; but while literary imitations have ranged from the horrendous to the very good, games have almost universally failed to reflect the care that went into Tolkien's work.



A typical screen shows the party of three hobbits about to meet a non-player character. Most buildings look like this, as does the vegetation.

The opposite is true in **Interplay's** *The Lord of the Rings, Volume 1*, and that's why it's so undeniably special. Unlike other computer games based on Tolkien's world, Interplay's efforts have focused on re-creating the detail and communicating the sheer love that went into the written work. In the process, this game has also managed to take a completely fresh approach to the nature of computer role-playing games. Both accomplishments are worthy and welcome.

If you look only at the game's interface, you won't see anything especially remarkable. Like most Interplay games, the interface is easy to use and the graphics are strong. You see the members of the fellowship trudging from place to place as you cross bridges, enter buildings, and climb hills in realistically rendered settings. From the map screen you can bring up the options menu, where you can load and save games, pause the action, stop the music, or quit the program. If you want the real stuff to happen, though, you must press the space bar and bring up the character menus.

From the character menu you can view the character's stats, cast magic spells, equip or trade items, talk to characters, use inventory items, or change leaders. Each action requires a single keystroke, which either does nothing or yields another menu. From this nested menu, another single keystroke accomplishes the action. Simple and elegant, the system handles some surprisingly complex situations. You also use this nested menu to engage in combat. Conducting battle is simply a matter of moving each character into position and either casting spells or attacking with fists, knives, swords, or axes. You lose life points when you're hit, and your enemy loses them when you hit him. It's all very simple, and very easy to use.

And this is, of course, in keeping with the Tolkien books. Most fantasy role-playing games and novels want combat regularly, but in Tolkien's trilogy it doesn't happen much at all. In Interplay's adaptation, as in the trilogy, combat is quite rare. It's possible to travel a long while without engaging in combat, and most fights are those you've sought yourself. In many cases, you can avoid combat by uttering the right password or showing the right item — and it's almost always better to do so. Unlike most



Inside Rivendell, Bilbo prepares to perform an action. He can talk to someone, trade or use items, and so on, as shown on the menu screen.

fantasy RPG's, *The Lord of the Rings* doesn't link gaining items with defeating enemies, so you can collect important artifacts without going through the ritual of battling foes. Monsters in this game don't carry treasure chests.

For that matter, there aren't many monsters. You don't meet up with 12 rabid rats, 6 zombies, or 8 were-bats. Instead, you encounter a couple of wolves, an orc or two, the occasional human, and sometimes, and only when and where appropriate, magical creatures like barrow-wights and wizards. The effect of infrequent combat is that the story carries far more suspense than you find in other fantasy RPG's. Another effect is that, once again, Interplay has captured the pace and feel of Tolkien's original trilogy.

The secret formula for Interplay's success, though, is attention to detail. You begin the game as Frodo, with Sam and Pippin standing with you in front of your hobbit-hole, Bag End. Before the game even starts, however, you're given a colorful summary of the first two chapters of Tolkien's book, and all details are accurate. Then you begin your journey, and nothing's omitted. In the Shire itself, for instance, you don't meet generic hobbits — you meet Lobelia, the Gaffer, and Farmer Maggot. Get through the Old Forest and you find Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, and in Bree you meet up with Strider and Barliman Butterbur. Bilbo, Arwen, and Elrohir await you in Rivendell, and you even come across Glorfindel on the road.

Interplay's adaptation also shines in its enhancements to Tolkien's story. Not wanting to put off a generation of Tolkien fans, the designers decided to add, very carefully, adventures not contained in the trilogy. *Carefully* is the key word here: Every added episode is either hinted at in the novels or clearly would have been possible in the Tolkien scheme.

In the Shire, for example, you meet the dwarf Druin, and in Buckland you come across Athelwyn the elf. Both will join your party, yet neither appears in the trilogy. Also in the Shire, you can take on several minor quests, ranging from finding a lost dog to rescuing two lost children among the ruins of the East Woods. After passing through the maze of the Old Forest you come across Bombadil, but you also meet the spirit of Withywindle the stream, and seek the aid of Ruddyoaks the tree. Both Withywindle and Ruddyoaks are discussed in the trilogy, but the game cleverly brings them to life. When Ruddyoaks joins your party, in fact, you are experiencing first-hand a bit of Tolkienesque magic. Truly excellent stuff.

Other clever side-adventures follow. A major addition to the plot involves the recovery of the Golden Wheel, a dwarfish artifact that's important for success. This plot, linked to the nature of the dwarves and Moria, is not in the trilogy, but it's appropriate to and very well-handled in the game. Little touches abound as well, such as Bilbo following you to the library in Rivendell and helping you find some essential scrolls. This is exactly the kind of thing Bilbo might have done, since he was fascinated by books and served as a constant source of information for Frodo.

The first part of this game takes place in the Shire and Buckland. Once through the many different adventures here, including a meeting with Gildor the Elf and a few other more surprising characters, the party must find its way through the Old Forest. The maze here is quite frustrating, but certainly no more than it was for the characters in the book. Past the Old Forest is Tom Bombadil's house, and after a series of fairly complex adventures, it's off to the event-filled Barrow-Downs. Eventually you'll find yourself lost in the fog, and when you emerge, you'll almost certainly be face to face with Sharkey's Shipping Store and the underground adventures that await you there. Then it's off to Bree, and eventually to Rivendell and beyond. This game takes you approximately to the end of the first volume of Tolkien's trilogy, and gives full treatment to all the major events that take place in the novel.

Fine, you say, but what if I haven't read Tolkien's books? Since I suspect there may be a few of you out there, I tried the game out on three people who hadn't read the trilogy. In every case, the opening screens provided all the background these players needed to begin the story, and the interface was intuitive enough to keep them interested and playing. None was an experienced game player, so this ease of play spoke volumes about Interplay's design.



Between episodes, colorful screens appear and relate the story. Here, you're reminded of the menace of the Black Riders.

This game is a treasure for Tolkien fans. While no game can possibly capture the novels' sheer drawing power, Interplay's designers have done everything possible to capture the spirit of the books. And, faithful to the original work, they've minimized combat and maximized wonder, something long overdue in the fantasy RPG genre. If all goes well, playing this game will actually enhance your reading of the books, and there's nothing more you can ask. To be quite honest, I didn't think it could be done.

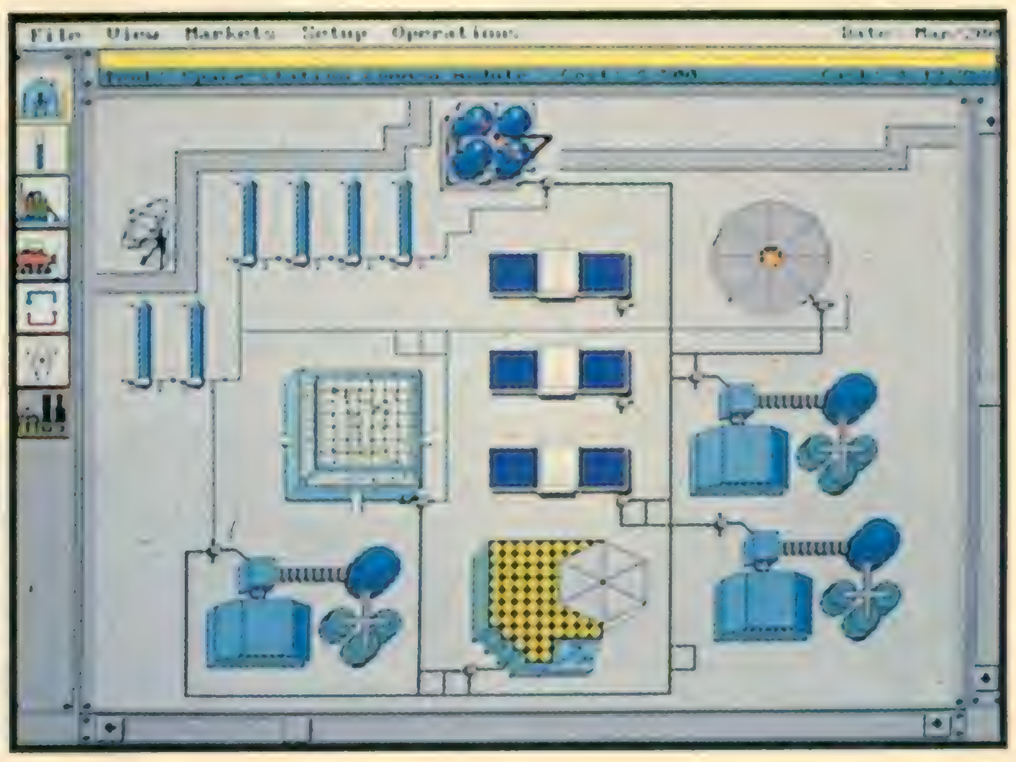
GP



VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

LUNAR EXPLORATIONS



It's another long (336-hour) lunar day at Moonbase Alpha's Green Cheese Semiconductor manufacturing complex.

It was 4 a.m. as computer columnist and occasional gadfly Arlan Levitan squinted impatiently at his trusty IBM clone's VGA display and gulped another jolt of strong Colombian java from his *Game Player's* coffee mug. Another long, cold, lunar night at the helm of Moonbase Alpha lay ahead, a post he had accepted with an eagerness which had, in an uncanny imitation of life, yielded to a strange mixture of ambivalence and hope for the future.

He dimly recalled first opening the glossy manual from **Wesson International's** *Moonbase*, eager to delve into the intricacies of what promised to be an engaging simulation. An avid follower of NASA-related activities, Levitan had been looking forward to the release of *Moonbase* ever since he first laid eyes on the teaser flyer that had accompanied his review copy of *TRACON II*, Wesson's excellent air-traffic control simulation.

Previous discussions with the development team at Wesson had indicated that *Moonbase* was derived from material obtained from NASA's Johnson Space Center by KDT Advanced Systems Group. The *Moonbase* simulation was reputed to be too complex for a general audience, and Wesson was considering marketing the simulation primarily to scientists and educators.

A quick read of the manual proved perplexing. There was a handful of technical information on lunar colony economics and dynamics, but most of the text was a series of vignettes portraying the travails of Charlie Weiss, a Moonbase administrator. The apparent intention of the narrative was to afford the reader the opportunity to "live the Moonbase experience," but contained little, if any, information that would prove to be helpful in the long run. The actual instructions for the simulation were presented in disjointed bite-sized chunks sandwiched into the story.

The goal was simple enough: Establish a lunar colony and become self-sufficient within a hundred years. The bottom line was that all man-made items cost money to build and maintain. NASA provided full support for the first ten years, but after that Levitan would be on his own.

The first order of business was to establish living quarters for a skeleton crew, communications facilities, and a landing pad for visitors. After that, generating revenue became the order of the day. A limited budget dictated that mining operations be established first. The first mines extracted liquid oxygen from the lunar crust. Later exploration found enough ice trapped beneath the surface to support a water extraction facility.

Most new structures required both power and cooling, the latter made simple enough by efficient radiator systems. In the beginning, photovoltaic solar arrays provided clean, safe power for the burgeoning colony. Generating power via cheap but dangerous atomic fission was wisely avoided. After scientists made a series of

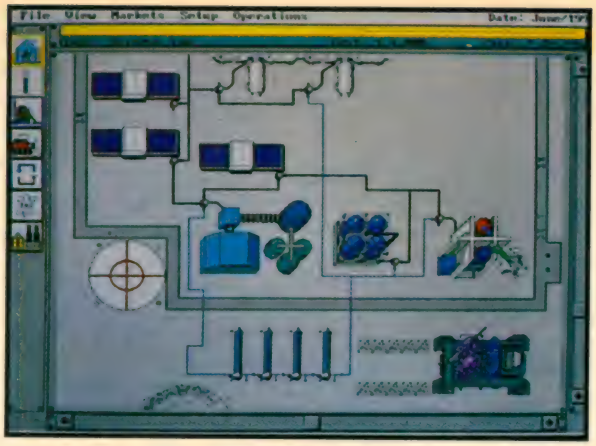
breakthroughs, atomic fusion became practical and reliable. Widespread acceptance of fusion power also meant that the moon's abundant Helium 3 could be mined and sold to generate further income.

As revenues grew, investment in manufacturing facilities was undertaken. The moon was well-suited to producing solar cells of outstanding purity, as well as high-speed integrated circuits. As the colony's mines and factories multiplied, new living quarters were added to accommodate the growing population. Recreation facilities helped keep morale and productivity high, and greenhouses were established to augment the supplies of food being shipped from Earth. As the settlement thrived, a luxury hotel was built to attract well-heeled tourists who were willing to pay dearly for a vacation on Luna.

Some care had to be taken in expanding living space as more colonists were ferried in from Earth. The miners and factory workers were likely to strike if conditions became too overcrowded. Volatile liquid oxygen produced by the LOX refineries was prone to detonation. Revenues from sales of manufactured goods and mined raw materials fluctuated with demand and economic conditions back on Earth. When market prices were low, there was rarely enough cash generated to fully resupply the base. When supplies were short, productivity of all industries fell dramatically.

In retrospect, Levitan had mixed feelings about his stint on Moonbase. While he recalled the elegant design and appearance of the colony buildings with great fondness, the animation and sound that supplemented the visual display of the base on his computer would have sorely disappointed less tolerant souls.

Things often failed to go as smoothly as they should while he built the colony from scratch. Even though he used an 80386-based PC throughout his tenure, his activities were often subject to long freeze-ups when new structures were added. The more complex the base grew, the more frequent the freezes became. He often wished his machine were equipped with an optional math coprocessor which his *Moonbase* manual claimed would speed things up markedly.



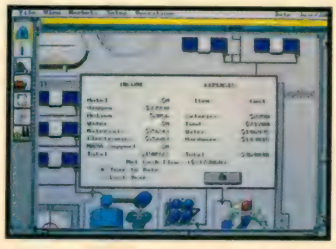
Soon after the Moonbase labs perfect atomic fusion, demand for solar cells falls through the lunar crust. Stepping up Helium 3 production may pull the base through some rough financial times.

Levitan had expected some kind of metaphorical pat on the back for meeting the Moonbase's prime objective, but found none forthcoming. Even when his goals for the base seemed to be met, life droned along with nary a final measure of success or failure. Adding to those feelings of frustration was the sense that life on Moonbase Alpha lacked a certain amount of depth. Mastering the rudiments of base expansion proved relatively simple. After that, the success or failure of the base seemed to depend on the vagaries of monthly price fluctuations, which seemed more fickle than a politician's promise.

The reports available to the Moonbase administrator lacked enough detail to track down the cause of operating losses in specific segments. The "normal" laws of supply and demand appeared to be inoperative or inscrutable. Limiting supply in the face of high demand by holding back goods for sale had no effect on market prices. The price of highly demanded goods in short supply often fell. Letting the computer automatically sell all goods off as they were produced was wasteful and illogical. Attempting to maximize return by watching market prices and selling manually was cumbersome and clumsy. What good were computers if you couldn't set up specific orders to sell based on market movement?

LOX plant explosions were particularly vexing. When an explosion occurred, there was no indication as to which plant had been vaporized. That invariably meant wasting precious time searching for the devastated site. Why distinguish between explosions caused by sabotage, mismanagement, or meteor strike if the saboteurs could not be routed out, lax managers be fired, or meteor shields be constructed?

Levitan's view of the base was occasionally obscured by space garbage, which necessitated the inclusion of a "redraw" command in the master program. Water production often halted inexplicably, although nothing seemed amiss.



At the end of every year, Moonbase administrators relive the dread of their youth by bringing home a report card.

Levitan leaned back in his acceleration couch as he prepared to disengage from his duties as Moonbase administrator and return to Earth. In retrospect, *Moonbase* had admirably succeeded at serving up a rather high-level look at the basic structure of future lunar colonies. Unfortunately, the insights it provided served only to whet the appetite rather than satiate it. If future administrators were afforded more sophisticated tools, guidance, and detail, Levitan concluded, another stint at Alpha might prove quite rewarding. Until then, Earth would suit him quite well.

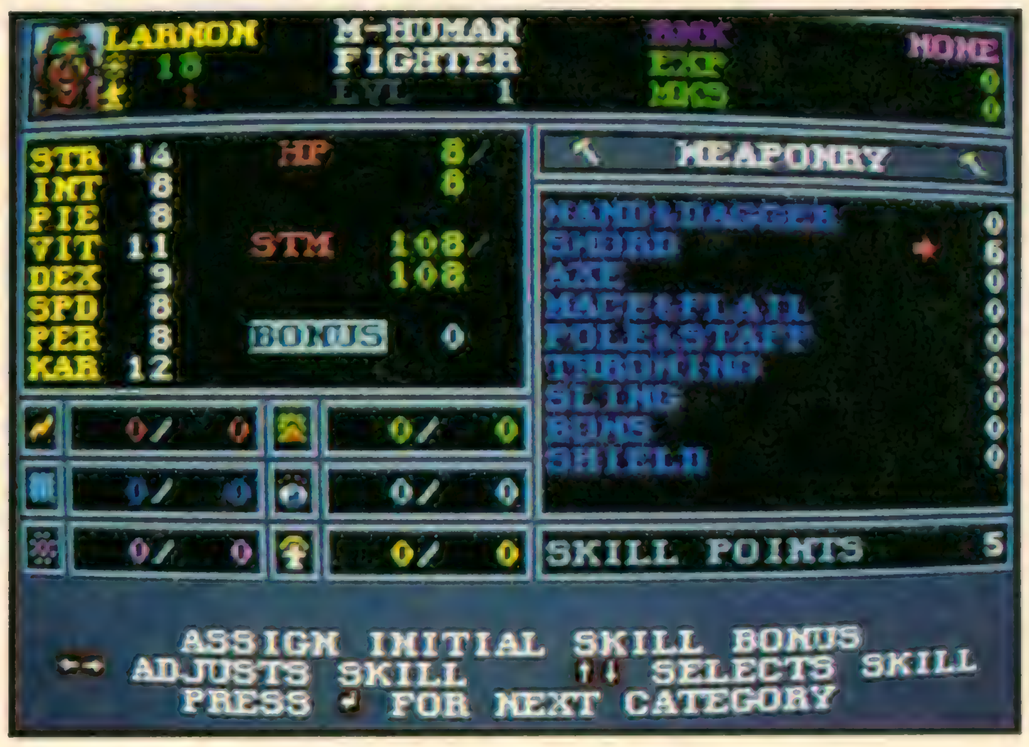
GP



ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

WIZARDRY: A NEW LOOK FOR THE '90S



You choose each character's race, profession, skills, and weaponry from menu screens such as this one.

Bane of the Cosmic Forge is to **Sir Tech's** Wizardry series what *The False Prophet* is to the Ultima collection. Both adventure role-playing series enjoyed a great deal of popularity in the 1980s, but both needed enhancements in order to be competitive in the 1990s. The enhancements for both series came largely in the form of new approaches to graphics, and the results — while not perfect — are certainly welcome.

The Cosmic Forge, the manual tells us, is a magical pen that has the ability to make anything written with it eventually come true. Your quest in the game is to assemble a party of powerful adventurers, find and obtain the Cosmic Forge, and defeat an evil wizard and an equally evil king and queen. You begin the game in the evil king's castle. The towers and chambers have been long abandoned, with only rogues, rats, serpents, and two characters — named L'Montes and Queequog — living there.

During the course of the game, you'll have to clear out the castle, the dungeons, some mines, a pyramid, a river valley, and other monster-intensive locations. You'll need plenty of experience points, magic spells, various strange items, and time to complete the quest. The game will probably take you at least a couple of months to complete, and that's assuming you don't have to backtrack and start over by creating a new party with a better blend of characters. Furthermore, there's a fair chance that you'll miss something important early on in the game, because it's easy to jam doors shut permanently.

Each character in *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* is rated in eight categories, ranging from strength and dexterity through vitality, intelligence, personality, and even karma. In addition, each character is graphically measured by two constantly changing lines, the first representing hit points and the second showing stamina. You can't go on and on in this game without resting, because tired characters are nearly useless.

Characters can specialize in selected weaponry, physical, and *academia* skills. Weaponry skills include sword, wand and dagger, bow, hand and feet, and shield. Physical skills are scouting, music, oratory, ninjutsu, as well as the two thievery skills of legerdemain and skullduggery. The academia skills include knowledge in the areas of mythology, alchemy, theosophy, and kirijutsu.

A character can be from any of 11 races and from any of 14 professions. A felpurr (feline) valkyrie is entirely possible here, as is a hobbit lord. Humans are the standard against which the others are measured, and elves, as in all fantasy role-playing (FRP) games, are excellent magicians but not superb fighters. Dwarves are strong and robust, but not especially dexterous or brilliant. Gnomes possess a piety above most other races, which makes them good candidates for priesthood. And hobbits, as usual, are the best thieves.



This party needs another member. We're about to add one here from the Master Options screen.

The truly interesting races, however, are the more unusual ones. Faeries aren't very useful in a fistfight, but they're extremely difficult to hit and very adept at magic. Lizardmen are unintelligent, but they're great to have around as fighters. Dracons are good warriors or rangers, and they can exhale acid in combat. Both Felpurrs (of the feline race) and Rawulfs (representing the canine species) have their special abilities. Finally, mooks are strong and intelligent, and look like shag carpets on legs — they're fun to have around.

While *Bane of the Cosmic Forge* makes use of standard FRP professions such as fighter, mage, thief, and ranger, characters in this game can also become alchemists, bards, psionics, valkyries, bishops, lords, and ninjas. Alchemists can make use of the wide range of potions you'll find, while lords are similar to the paladins found frequently in other FRP games. Bishops are superpriests, and valkyries are female warrior-priests. You'll want to upgrade characters to greater professions as soon as possible or, even better, stay with the character-creation process until you get the professions you want.

Most action in the game is achieved by selecting options from menus. When you encounter a monster, for example, the battle or interaction menus appear, and you can assign different tasks to different members of your party. At any other point in the game, you can press the Enter key and bring up another menu, which allows you to cast spells, equip characters, use items, search rooms, open doors (by either bashing them in or picking the lock), and save games. You can save multiple games only by assigning each game to a different directory — this is a minor annoyance.

Another more frustrating annoyance is the game's system of copy protection. Previous Wizardry games used a key-disk method of copy protection — you had to play the game with the original master disk in a drive or you couldn't play at all. *Cosmic Forge* uses a different method: You install the game on your hard drive, but each time you start the game you must find a three-symbol code in a small booklet which uses the black-ink-on-dark-brown-paper scheme that's become so popular lately. Because of the sheer number of codes here, this booklet is especially difficult to use. Not only that, but some of the codes are simply incorrect. Two wrong tries and you're kicked back out to DOS. If you know you typed in the correct code, it's even more frustrating.

More important, though, are problems with the fundamentals of the Wizardry series itself. As the granddaddy of the computer role-playing systems, Wizardry established a number of patterns that remain with us nearly a full decade later. First, experience points and wealth are gained almost exclusively by destroying monsters. Second, the game revolves around puzzles: You must, in effect, push a different series of buttons in precisely the right order to get into certain rooms or make particular items appear. And you must guess, or somehow learn, the right words to say to the right characters, often with little external guidance. Play becomes extremely repetitious after a while, especially when you seem unable to make any progress.

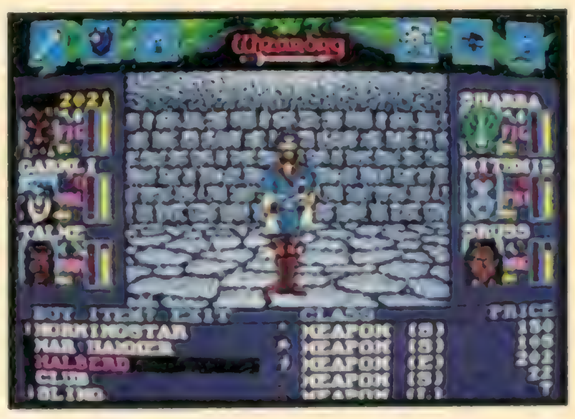
Cosmic Forge improves the Wizardry experience in a couple of important ways. First, you don't have to send your characters off for training in order to raise their experience and skill levels. Instead, the game presents you with an upgrade screen as soon as you've achieved enough experience. Furthermore, you can assign skill points as you wish, specializing your character or branching him out into addditional skill areas.

Second — and this is the most obvious change — the graphics in *Cosmic Forge* are far better than those in any previous Wizardry game. The walls and doors look crisp and imposing, and all the steel grates have keyholes that actually encourage exploration. The graphics are EGA, not VGA, a point that becomes instantly apparent when you see the monster portraits (which are the weakest graphic treatments in the game). But even with the new graphics being EGA only, the improvement over earlier Wizardry games is dramatic.



As in all fantasy role-playing games, a set of stairs leading downward portends something ominous.

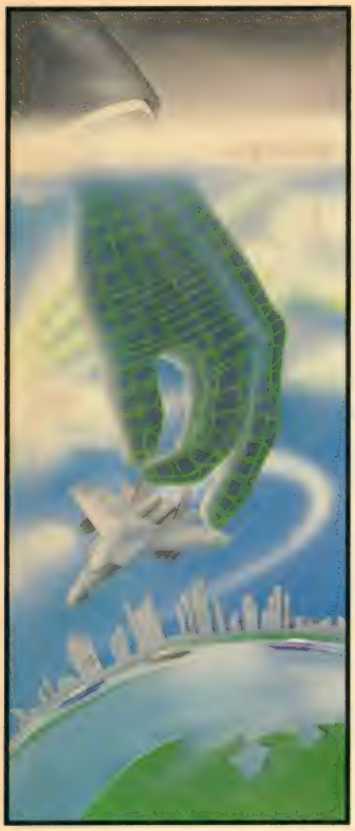
At the start of this column, I said that the newest installment in both the Wizardry and the Ultima series represented a welcome but not perfect improvement. In the next volume, the seventh for each series, the designers for both systems should strive to rethink some of their basic assumptions: In the case of Ultima, the games should become less sprawling and more plot-intensive, while in the case of Wizardry, the Dungeons-and-Dragons/experience-treasure link should be de-emphasized in favor of more satisfying means of improving skills.



This character, Ankra, needs a weapon. He plans to use some of his 2021 gold pieces to buy a halberd.

Both series have legions of fans, and the fact that they've recast themselves for the '90s is a very welcome sign. In the case of Wizardry, it signals the start of what looks to be another fine decade.

GP



VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN R. LEVITAN

SUTURE SELF

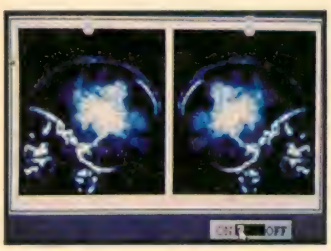


Who says that those you minister to are ungrateful wretches? Here, the surgical team has a quick meal on one of your patients.

Several years ago, **Software Toolworks** shook up the microcomputer scene with *Life & Death*, a medical simulation that allowed armchair interns to diagnose and operate on patients suffering from a variety of abdominal disorders. *Life and Death* created quite a stir when it was released. Its concept, while admittedly not catering to the tastes of the mass market, was undeniably innovative.

Those who had the stomach to enjoy the original are likely to let the sequel go to their heads. *Life and Death II - The Brain* attempts to turn those with sturdy constitutions and unflagging persistence into qualified computer brain surgeons. Although it may not be everyone's cup of barium, *Life and Death II* markedly improves on its forerunner, with better graphics, sound, and depth of play.

Forget about the lurid, violent action depicted in the ads for today's shoot-em-ups and dungeon quests. The packaging for *Life and Death II*, which features a surgically gloved hand clutching a slimy pink brain, wins my vote for most gruesome cover art of the year.



This skull X-ray of a patient reveals nothing amiss—you'll have to conduct other tests before making your diagnosis.

The fundamental concept of *Life and Death II* is pretty much the same as that of the original. As a resident first-year neurosurgeon at Toolworks General Hospital, you examine patients, diagnose their symptoms, and if necessary, go tiptoeing through their innards with various sharp, pointed implements.

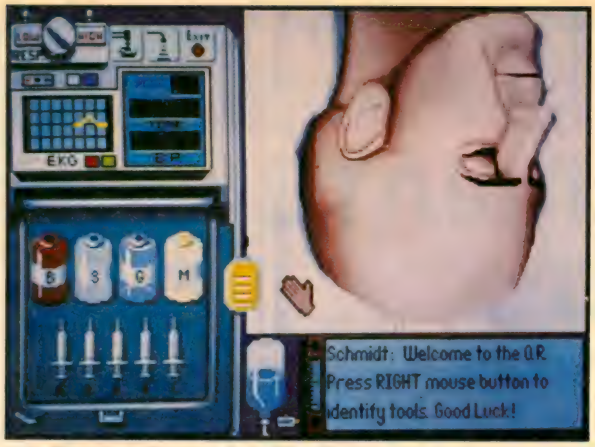
Mastering the diagnostic process is simple enough. Before proceeding with your examination, a glance at a clipboard outlines why the patient was admitted, and occasionally provides information that can keep you from ordering potentially dangerous tests. For example, you quickly learn that it's not a good idea to expose patients with pacemakers to strong magnetic fields.

The head, upper torso, and legs are all graphically displayed so you can examine them for normal reflex reactions, muscular weakness, and sensitivity to pain. (Don't forget to also check your patient's clarity of speech and pupillary action.) Fortunately, the results of these exams are recorded automatically for you.

Following the physical exam, run a few lab tests to aid you in your analysis. After your choice of a series of skull x-rays, CAT scans, Magnetic Resonance Imaging, and angiographies, it's time to put your patient's life on the line with your diagnosis and suggested treatment. If there's some doubt, a quick glance at your online neurology text can help you zero in on the likely ailment.

As is often the case in real life, the diagnostic process be-

comes rote and rather mundane after a short while. There's a reasonable amount of variation in patient symptoms, but there's less than a dozen actual conditions that you're looking for. Drug abusers, schizophrenics, and hysterics invariably get shipped to a shrink. Migraine sufferers get a prescription for codeine, stroke victims are assigned physical therapy, and minor nerve inflammation (neuropathy) calls for simple exercise. Those with subdural hematomas, aneurysms, and brain tumors are wheeled to the operating room to await your surgical ministrations.



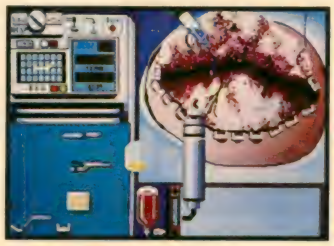
No, this isn't Kirstie Allie in a remake of "Star Trek: The Motionless Picture." It's a typical pre-surgery scene.

Before attempting an operation, a trip to *Life and Death II*'s classroom is mandatory, since surgical procedures are not covered in the program's sparse 16-page manual. In fact, there's little likelihood that your patient will survive surgery unless you make written notes of the on-screen surgical tutorial, since it's not available once you're in the operating room. For example, the simplest operation, treating a sub-dural hematoma, typically requires more than 30 thirty steps, which must be performed in the proper order.

Surgery is not a place for those with weak stomachs or shaky hands. In the operating room, *Life and Death II*'s 256-color VGA graphics and sound effects can be disconcertingly realistic. Once your initial queasiness subsides, though, you'll be moving from scalpel to Rainey's clip with ease, and won't even bat an eye as you drill into your patient's skull. Even if you get the procedures down pat, you've got to monitor patient's heart functions, blood pressure, urine retention, and blood gas level. Crises in any critical function must be tended to quickly or your patient won't be around to sign all those insurance forms.

At higher levels of play, almost anything that can go wrong does, making successful completion of a procedure even more difficult. Those with truly masochistic tendencies can also elect to play at the nearly impossible "nightmare" level.

You're not completely on your own in the operating room. Your assistants, who you select before the operation, can offer helpful hints during the course of the surgery. If you're playing at any level above novice, greater care must be exercised in choosing your operating team, since their personal expertise and relationships with one another can affect their efficiency under pressure.



Here's one of Dr. Levitan's more open-minded patients.

There's a great deal of satisfaction in successfully completing an operation in *Life and Death II*, but I would have written into the simulation a more emotional payoff than a slap on the back from your peers. Patients don't come back to thank you (or, for that matter, complain). Everyone you work with may be hostile to or romantically entangled with someone else on the staff, but apparently you're either too tired, principled, or homely to think about getting involved.

The diagnostic process is understandably repetitive, but is far more boring than it need be. You can examine hundreds of patients in the course of a game, but you only see a handful of different faces. Are these different patients or professional hypochondriacs? Test results for patients suffering from the same symptoms are exactly alike. I suppose if you've seen one intercranial aneurysm, you've seen 'em all.

Although the install program for *Life and Death II* contains an option for putting the simulation onto floppy disks, doing so is about as practical as removing your own brain tumor. When installed on a hard drive and configured for optimal smoothness of play, the program takes up almost five megabytes of space. Software Toolworks also advises against scrubbing for surgery if your machine is anything less than a 12-MHz PC/AT.

The manual, brief as it may be, contains one of the most peculiar disclaimers in entertainment software history:

"WARNING...*Life and Death II* is a game for fun, not education....No representation or warranty is made that any statement, diagram, or image is accurate as a fact or valid as an opinion concerning any anatomical, medical, surgical or health matter. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should any person rely upon or be influenced by these materials in making any health-related decision...."

Rats! So much for claiming that success at *L&D II* qualifies me for waltzing around inside my comrade's craniums with a Ginsu.

In spite of those words of warning, I'm willing to testify before any motherboard of inquiry that *Life & Death II - The Brain* is grossly entertaining and educational. Oh well, I suppose if the disclaimer hadn't been included, I'd have ended up reviewing *Life & Death III - The Malpractice Suit*.

GP



ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

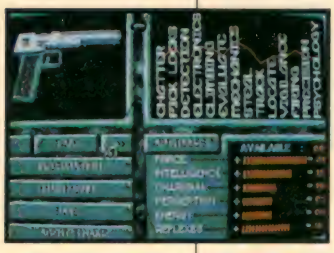
B.A.T. — A FRESH APPROACH TO ROLE PLAYING



The gorgeous title screen demonstrates the richness of B.A.T.*'s graphics. Not all the screens look this good, but many are excellent.*

Role-playing games are popular, and as a result they tend to be quite similar. In less-popular genres, game designers have an incentive — better sales — to enhance existing designs. But there's no reason for designers of role-playing games to make changes when they know that a game which is similar to previous designs will enjoy healthy sales.

B.A.T., surprisingly enough, is truly distinct. Whether or not it will be easily accepted is another matter, but it is different. Although its graphically oriented, point-and-click interface highly resembles the one used in ICOM Simulation's Deja Vu series, *B.A.T.*, from **Ubi Soft**, incorporates several elements we've never seen used in combination before. In addition, *B.A.T.* is much more rooted in exploration than in quest-fulfillment. It's possible to spend much of your time exploring the game world rather than chasing the bad guys, and once your mission is over you can explore to your heart's content.



The Agent Creations screen is where you can adjust the attributes of your new agents. This is also where you decide on a weapon — make your decision carefully.

B.A.T. stands for Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters, an organization which covertly seeks out crises, then cooperates with the local police forces to eliminate the problem. The B.A.T. collects its information from agents known as "bloodhounds" and from small robots which are sent into areas inaccessible to human beings. B.A.T. agents are equipped with some type of weaponry, a few days' worth of supplies, and a personal computer dubbed B.O.B., which is implanted in the agent's right forearm.

The *B.A.T.* universe is composed of several organizations with similarly suspicious initials. The C.F.G. (Confederation of the Galaxies) looks after many of the affairs of the universe, and is itself a part of the U.M.R. (Union of World Assembly), which develops laws and rules for all its member planets.

There is, of course, a bad guy. Actually there are two, Vrangor and his accomplice Merigo. Vrangor, a psychopathic genius, has escaped from prison and reappeared on the planet Silenia. Vrangor has managed to use one of B.A.T.'s secret frequencies to transmit a message: Unless the C.F.G. evacuates the population of Silenia within ten days and presents him with the deed to the planet, he'll detonate 16 nucturobiogenic bombs hidden in the Silenian city of Terrapolis.

Silenia is a major supplier of the raw materials for the important fuel khergol, and the loss of the planet would be a major blow to the U.M.R. It's up to B.A.T. to track down Merigo and eliminate Vrangor, and — guess what?! — you're the agent that's been given the assignment.

You start the game in an astroport on Silenia, just outside the city of Terrapolis. Your first task is to find the washroom, where you'll be given instructions and other needed items. One of these is a hologram of Merigo, which you can use to



You can check into a room inside the Astroport Hotel, but it's expensive. Instead, see if you can get some information out of the attendant.

ask the locals about his whereabouts and doings. Of course, flashing the hologram indiscriminately can get you into trouble, but the choice is yours. In any case, get out of the astroport quickly, because if you tarry anywhere too long you'll find yourself in a shootout.

The game is presented as a series of graphics screens, and you use the mouse or keyboard to move your character and select objects on the screen with which to interact. The cursor changes according to the type of interaction you can perform. For example, when the normal cursor (B.A.T.'s logo) is onscreen, you can click the mouse button to access B.O.B., your personal computer.

You can talk to any character that has a word-bubble icon appearing over it, and a bottle icon (found in bars, naturally) means that a drink is available. A directional arrow appears whenever you can enter another location. Other icons are used to target enemies, reveal if an item is available for purchase, and determine whether you can use a machine such as an elevator. There's even one (a heart) for making the acquaintance of a young lady at a dance hall in the city's red-light district.

Interaction is the key to this game. There's a wide range of human characters to converse with, but you'll also meet a number of other types of characters during your mission: Skunks are anti-social rebels, kradokids are a lizardlike race, stickrobs are armed robots, and glokmups are 9-foot tall robbers and assassins. One of the weak points of *B.A.T.* is its lack of differentiation between two characters of the same type — once you've met one glokmup, you feel you've met them all. Nonetheless, you must use each encounter to learn all you can about Merigo and Vrangor, because you never know where you'll find help.

When you create a character (you can use the one provided, but it's more fun to make your own), you can adjust some of your character's attributes. These are called modifiable competences, as opposed to the basic competences (which can't be changed) and aptitudes (which are calculated from the competences). The basic competences are life potential, which starts at 99 percent; level (i.e., character level); experience; calorie and hydration levels (yep, you have to eat and drink to keep your reflexes sharp); and credits (money).

You can't alter these when creating a character, but they change constantly as the game goes on. The competences you can modify during character creation include force, intelligence, charisma, perception, energy, and reflexes. From these competences are calculated aptitudes for chatter (i.e., smooth-talking), lockpicking, detection (of traps), electronics, climbing, evaluating, mechanics, stealing, psychology, firing weapons, and so on.

During this process, you also select one large weapon or two small ones. The Vokstrasof is a pen-sized weapon, not too deadly but easily concealed. The Beckman shoots a photonic beam and is shaped like a pistol. The Hacker 30 fires a burst of needles, and the Haas 10 is a pistol missile-launcher (two types of missiles are available). There's also the MOZ, an infrasonic cannon, and the NOVA, a photon accelerator. You receive your weapon when you rendezvous with your contact in the astroport, so be sure to flee if you're attacked before you meet him.

During combat sequences (which utilize the whole screen), you're presented with a picture and a couple of icons. One icon lets you flee, and you'll find yourself using it quite often. If you're carrying two weapons, you must select one before firing. (If you have a force field, you can use it as well.) Combat is easy to perform, but it's also easy to get killed.

Finally, there's B.O.B., the Bio-directional Organic Bioputer. This is implanted in your arm, and is accessed by clicking the left mouse button when the cursor is the B.A.T. logo. B.O.B. has four programs: one displays your characteristics, another shows your physical condition, and the third accesses the automatic language translator (you'll need it often) and adjusts your heartbeat (normal, hibernation, or acceleration modes). A fourth program lets you program B.O.B. to make these functions automatic.

For example, you can tell B.O.B. to switch automatically to begin robot translation if you encounter a robot, and to enter alien translation if you meet an alien. You can have B.O.B. automatically warn you if a particular enemy is nearby, or to display messages if you become tired or hungry. You can also tell B.O.B. to accelerate your heartbeat during combat with certain kinds of creatures.

There's more, but this description should either whet your appetite or turn you away. Wandering through the icons can be a little tedious at times, but after a few sessions you should get used to it. Also, you'll need a VGA card for *B.A.T.* — there are no EGA or CGA versions.

If you're in search of something different in the role-playing world, you owe it to yourself to give *B.A.T.* a try. And, whether you like the game or not, you've got to give Ubi Soft a lot of credit for trying to bring some variety to the world of role-playing games.



Even though the end-of-the-world nightmare screen is brilliant and colorful, you'll hope that you never see it again — but you will.

GP



VIRTUAL REALITY

ARLAN LEVITAN

CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT: FLYING THE UNFRIENDLY SKIES



This backseat driver is usually welcome. If you get into a pickle, heeding Yeager's advice can keep you from becoming a finely sliced garnish.

Will miracles never cease? I finally broke down and replaced my faithful old PC/AT clone last month. Although the slothlike performance of *Microsoft Windows* on my AT was one reason for my decision, the last batch of entertainment software that crossed my desk for review was the major factor that led to my new acquisition. Roughly half of the packages recommended running the programs at speeds way above the top end of my AT.

If your PC just isn't cutting the mustard when it comes to the hot new simulations, at least be glad you've got several options available. You could pick up one of the increasingly affordable 386's on the market, but if you can hold out a bit longer you might want to wait until the end of summer for the arrival of machines based on Intel's new 486SX chip. They'll be less expensive than standard 486 systems, and another plus is that you won't be short on computing speed and muscle when 1992's simulation software starts rolling in.

After a month with my new system (486 25Mhz), I'm fairly confident that I'm one step ahead of the software houses. Programs with voracious appetites for CPU cycles are delightfully manageable and responsive.

As it turned out, my collection of flight simulation software benefited most from the upgrade. I can still recall walking into a local computer store back in 1980 and seeing my first flight software. It was subLogic's *Flight Simulator*, running on a 64K Apple II computer. The graphics were green-on-black wire-frame renderings, and the jerky animation was causing the Apple's 6502 CPU to heat up like a griddle in a greasy diner.

The primary intent of the original *Flight Simulator* was to model the mechanics of visual and instrument flight in a Piper Cherokee, and it succeeded admirably. To avoid the "all work and no play" syndrome inherent to many simulations, subLogic built a "World War I Ace" dogfighting game into the program. That aerial combat game has survived intact to this day, existing within Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 4.0*.

Despite its fancy trappings and endless options, the primary focus of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator 4.0* has remained on faithfully simulating the process of peaceful and unobtrusive aviation. What's an aspiring air jockey with naturally aggressive tendencies to do?

I've had my fill of high-tech fighter simulations whose controls are only slightly more complex than those of the Space Shuttle. And I'm not particularly fond of flight simulators that faithfully reproduce the "twitchy" controls of today's fastest aircraft. It takes a lot more patience than I'm willing invest to deal with simulations that yield a "crash and burn" every time you sneeze.

Fortunately, **Electronic Arts** dove in to my rescue with a pre-release copy of *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. To be perfectly honest, I wasn't expecting

to be bowled over, especially based on my experience with *Chuck Yeager's Advanced Flight Trainer*, released by Electronic Arts back in 1987. *Advanced Flight Trainer* concentrated on the test pilot process (i.e., defining an aircraft's performance envelope and handling characteristics), although there were some mildly interesting aerial race scenarios also included.

The program never managed to grab more than my passing interest, but *Advanced Flight Trainer* appealed to enough people to become a certified platinum-level best-seller. In an effort to deal with nitpickers such as yours truly, Electronic Arts has pulled out the stops for *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* by calling on programming wunderkind Brad Iverson, the man largely responsible for the highly acclaimed *LHX Attack Chopper*.

The basic structure of *Yeager's Air Combat* is simple enough. The Historic Mission scenarios form the heart of *Yeager's Air Combat*. Historically faithful renditions of dogfights from World War II, the Korean Conflict, and Vietnam give you the chance to fly six types of fighters against 14 different opponents. Before each mission begins, prudent pilots can study the helpful tactical advice that's offered, and during dogfights, Uncle Chuck's visage occasionally appears in an on-screen window to offer bits of wisdom that could keep your bacon out of the frying pan.

A mission-creation option let's you cast historical accuracy aside and design your own dream dogfight. Your fighter



Should you tire of the Historic Missions, use the Create Missions option to give yourself the starring role in the dogfight of your dreams.



One look at this Mustang and you'll be itching to get on your pony and ride. You can fly six different fighters, and — if you have the skill — flame 14 types of opponents in the skies over Europe, Korea, and Southeast Asia.

type, altitude, number and types of opponents and their skill level may be varied to suit your tastes and talent.

On a VGA-equipped machine, the graphics in *Yeager's Air Combat* are downright dandy. Besides fine, uncluttered cockpits and extremely smooth motion, the rendering of the horizon line and semi-opaque clouds is especially pleasant. The visible features of other planes markedly increase as they approach, and the extremely high level of detail makes *Yeager's Air Combat* the most realistic and visually appealing dogfight simulator I've tried.

Aircraft handling in *Yeager's Air Combat* is quite forgiving, making it a pleasure to fly any of the six available aircraft. That doesn't mean you can afford to sleep at the wheel, though. Pull an unhealthy dose of G's and the world will grow dim as you begin to black out. Exceeding your plane's maximum safe speed is likely to make more than your lunch come unglued. Lift failures, stalls, and spins lurk around the corner, although under most circumstances you'll be hard pressed to get yourself into a truly unrecoverable flight attitude.

Yeager's Air Combat features most of the requisite bells and whistles I've come to expect from a good flight simulator, including multiple views of the action, a VCR function for mission save and playback, and controls for adjusting sound and for setting the level of detail. Although it hadn't been implemented in the version I received, Yeager's digitized voice will be integrated into the final product.

According to Brad Iverson, the toughest programming he encountered with *Yeager's Air Combat* was implementing the artificial intelligence routines that controlled the behavior of the enemy aircraft. In this early version, adversaries were prone to smooth-line flying, making them sitting ducks during head-on passes. In the finished product, your foes will "jink" when engaged, making it tougher to score a hit.

It looks like Electronic Arts may have another mega-hit on its hands with *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. All that's needed to round out the version I took for a test spin is some "Top Gun" lessons in air combat. According to my sources at Electronic Arts, those will come in the form of a thick manual that covers the ins and outs of aerial tactics and strategy. Then again, who needs it anyway? After all, Yeager was never known for doing things by the book.

GP



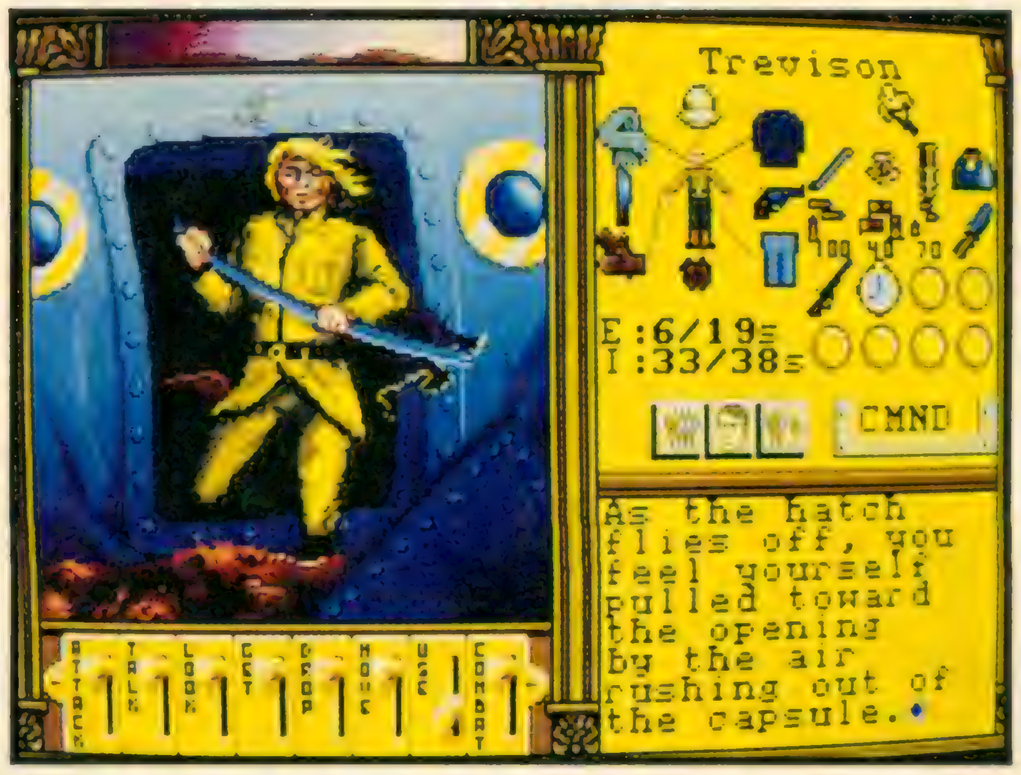
The attention to detail in Chuck Yeager's Air Combat *is impressive. Get any closer to this B-17 and you'll be scraping paint off your prop.*



ALTERNATE LIVES

NEIL RANDALL

ULTIMATELY, MARS



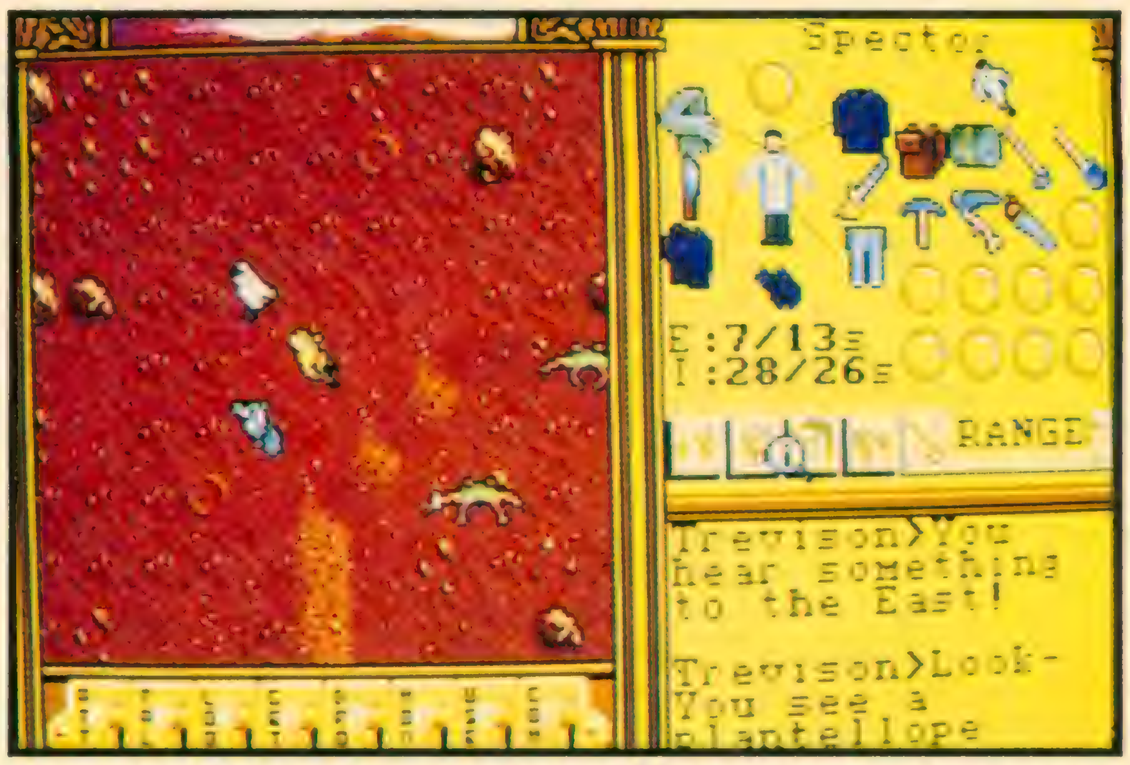
Our hero exits the space capsule's hatch and steps into the cold Martian air. Be sure to take a coat — some oxium pellets will help, too.

Origin's new Worlds of Ultima series, of which *Martian Dreams* is the second entry, represents a new and interesting variation on the classic theme of the Ultima games, particularly *Ultima VI*. The first five games in the Ultima series were designed primarily for the Apple II system, as the primitive graphics of the PC versions make all too evident. With *Ultima VI*, Richard Garriott ("Lord British") turned to a VGA-based PC for development, and the game changed. The graphics became far more sophisticated, and the Ultima system took on a much more state-of-the-art appearance. Some Apple II aficionados claimed — and still do — that game play suffered as a result; but there was no question in anyone's mind that the new look was here to stay.

Whereas most fantasy role-playing (FRP) systems generate sequel upon sequel, the revamped Ultima system generated a spin-off in the form of the Worlds of Ultima series. Rather than quickly following *Ultima VI* with *Ultima VII* and *VIII*, Garriott and Origin decided to give the Ultima system a workout in other kinds of fictional worlds.

The initial result was *Savage Empire*, a romp, of sorts, through earth's prehistoric past. The newest addition is *Martian Dreams*, a fine piece of old-fashioned science fiction with the flavor of a Jules Verne or H.G. Wells story.

Martian Dreams is billed as another Orb of the Moon time-travel adventure, but that's really only a way of lending some (rather forced) consistency to the Ultima universe. You don't actually time-travel during the game, and you don't use Ultima's Orb of the Moon gate system. Instead, you start your adventure in the year 1895, aboard a space capsule in the southern hemisphere of the planet Mars. That's right, you're on Mars, and it's very red.



On the forbidding red surface of Mars, Trevison, Spector, and Nellie Bly encounter two plantellopes. Time for a fight, and not necessarily an easy one.



Here, Trevison talks with Dibbs, the officer in charge of the 1893 landing site. He has loads of clues to help in solving the adventure.

Here's what's happened. In 1893, it was announced that a spacecraft would be fired out of a large cannon aimed at Mars. Naturally, the event was the subject of great interest, and the launch attracted many of the Victorian era's most prominent citizens. These people were given a tour of the craft the day before its scheduled launch, and some mysterious person chose that precise moment to commit a heinous crime. While all of these important people were on board, the spacecraft was launched, and the flowers of Victorian citizenry were lost.

This is where you come in. Along with Sigmund Freud, journalist Nellie Bly, inventor Nikola Tesla, and physician C. L. Blood, you've been sent to Mars to rescue the 1893 expedition. Given that the earlier expedition included such stalwarts as actress Sarah Bernhardt, western heroes Buffalo Bill Cody and Calamity Jane, railroad magnate Andrew Carnegie, scientist and educator George Washington Carver, inventor Thomas Edison, publisher William Randolph Hearst, explorer Robert Peary, and political figures Nikolai Lenin, Theodore Roosevelt, and Gregori Rasputin, you've got some serious and important rescuing ahead of you.

Martian Dreams uses the same game system found in *Savage Empire*, a simplified version of the *Ultima VI* system. The left half of the screen features a mostly overhead view of the landscape your party is walking across. At the bottom of this portion is a series of toggle switches, which you can click on to perform possible actions. The bottom right quarter of the screen contains a text display, which describes locations, reports conversations, and so on. At the top right is character information: You can see statistics about the party or the individual character, and it's from this area that you access each character's inventory.

You can use the mouse to perform almost all of the game's actions. Each of the action commands — Attack, Talk, Look, Get, Drop, Move, Use, and Combat — can be toggled by clicking on the command switches, and you can act on items and people by clicking first on the switch and then on the item or person. For instance, to move a pile of coal into a furnace (which, by the way, is an essential action in the game), you click on Use, then on the Shovel icon (in someone's inventory), then on the pile of coal (found in the main screen picture), and finally on the desired location. Similarly, to attack a creature, click on Attack and then on the picture of the creature.

You'll find yourself using the inventory displays over and over again. First, you must dress and arm each character, which means displaying the character's inventory, then clicking on the weapon you want. As long as the character has an empty hand, the weapon will be instantly readied (if you're using a gun, you must acquire bullets separately). To dress a character, click on the item of clothing; the character will be clothed instantly.

All of this is crucial to playing *Martian Dreams* — if you leave the space capsule without dressing the characters in heavy clothing (coats, scarves, gloves, etc.), they'll lose hit points as they start to freeze. If you forget to ready the proper weapons (or forget to change them in mid-battle), you'll find yourself with fist-fighters only. Furthermore, using the right tools for the right job is vital to your success, as you'll discover almost immediately.

Your first task is to talk with everyone aboard the space capsule. By doing so, you can acquire a pry bar to get the hatch open, and you'll also discover the coordinates used by the 1893 expedition. Find a sextant, which will give you a good reading on coordinates wherever you go, then head for the storage area at the capsule's rear. Dress, arm yourself, and head towards the 1893 site. There you'll pick up Dibbs, who will give you all kinds of useful information about finding your way around Mars.

After that, it's a matter of visiting the important locations, acquiring supplies, information, and a sense of what you must do. The largest puzzle lies in restoring power to the planet, a task that will keep you occupied for many hours. But one hint, and only one, because it's vital to your progress: Go to the outpost and take the blue berries, then learn how they affect the Move and Get commands.



Coker is a robot, and he's highly knowledgeable about the power system on Mars. If you need more information, look around and read the scrolls.

If you're a fan of the Ultima game system, and you liked the storyline of *Savage Empire*, *Martian Dreams* will prove every bit as engrossing. With a 12-MHz machine and VGA display, movement sometimes slows to a crawl — a fact that makes you a bit reluctant to travel around — but aside from that, the system works very well. The sound and music are excellent (Roland, Ad Lib, and Sound Blaster boards supported). *Martian Dreams* is good stuff, and Mars is not a bad planet on which to spend your game time.

GP

LEMMINGS

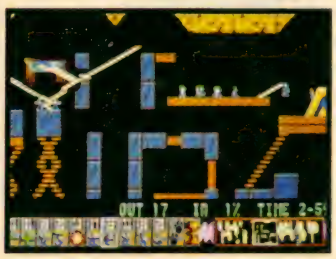
SELBY BATEMAN



The landscapes in Lemmings *are colorful and fanciful, and almost always a challenge.*

Every so often, a PC game comes along that offers a new twist, opens a previously unseen door, or turns a familiar concept on its head. For example, *Tetris* from Spectrum Holobyte is an almost too simple puzzle game that has become a universally popular success. Maxis Software's *Sim City* makes urban planning fascinating and fun, and at the same time teaches a tremendous amount about the balancing act we call urban civilization. *Lemmings* is such a groundbreaker — simple, charming, challenging, and decidedly different.

We've all grown up hearing the well-worn references to lemmings, those small arctic rodents whose migration patterns often send them off cliffs, into the ocean, or toward some other means of mass destruction. We may never know why lemmings are so obdurate when it comes to their travel plans, but thanks to a new game from **Psygnosis** you have the chance to save untold num-bers of lemmings from their doom. At first you'll play *Lemmings* because it's a lot of fun — and you'll keep playing because the little characters are so cute that you feel downright depressed if you let too many of them plod stupidly into oblivion.



Building stair-ways is one of the trickiest feats these lemmings can undertake.

There are four levels of difficulty — Fun, Tricky, Taxing, and Mayhem — each made up of thirty different rooms or areas into which varying numbers of lemmings drop. That's a full 120 puzzles to solve, so you're not about to finish this game off in one or two sittings.

As the hapless lemmings fall into each area, they immediately begin walking toward what will quickly be their demise — unless you leap into action and direct a few of their number to perform certain life-saving tasks.

With the click of a mouse or the press of a key, you can "teach" a lemming to block off a passageway, build a bridge, dig a hole, and so forth. You can even have a lemming blow itself up for the greater good (the poor critter sticks his fingers in his ears and explodes into multi-colored atoms). And, sad to say, there's even a "Nuke 'Em" option that's almost too painful to contemplate.

On some levels, you may have to get by with a restricted amount of options. Perhaps you'll only have five chances to create bridge builders in order to work your way out of a hole. Or maybe you will have multiple options that must be used in a particular order to succeed — dig, then build, then block, for example. The first 30 rooms give you lots of practice at using one or more of the actions that save their lives, so you can slowly work your way toward the upper levels, where things grow frantic indeed.

The areas into which the lemmings drop are quite varied and colorful, with fanciful structures and multi-leveled platforms and walkways to navigate. If you have a sound board, you'll also appreciate a surprisingly rich background musical score that changes from level to level.

This is without doubt a unique and very special game environment, featuring multi-faceted puzzles imbued with subtlety and wit. The Psygnosis designers obviously have a keen sense of humor, and they've filled *Lemmings* with a charming sense of the absurd.

As noted earlier, this is a groundbreaking effort, and comes with the highest recommendation. But be forewarned. Make a simple mistake in guiding those tiny fellows, and you'll send luckless lemmings to an early grave. And you don't want that on your conscience.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory required; VGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; AdLib and Sound Blaster sound boards supported; mouse and joystick supported (mouse highly recommended).

MICROLEAGUE BASEBALL: THE MANAGER'S CHALLENGE

NEIL RANDALL

MicroLeague Baseball: The Manager's Challenge is the latest upgrade of the popular baseball simulation from **MicroLeague**. *MicroLeague Baseball* (and *MicroLeague Baseball II*) has a following every bit as dedicated as the following for Electronic Arts' *Earl Weaver Baseball*, and for good reason. *MLB* has always offered an easily managed statistical update system that allowed quick experimentation with new teams and new players. It is very much a game for those who want to call the shots.

As the title of this latest release suggests, the focus hasn't shifted. Where *The Manager's Challenge* differs is in the interface and the options. Rather than relying on a variety of keypresses, the game now features a series of easy-to-use menus for selecting from a new array of playing options. The result is a game that feels more realistic than its predecessors, but also one that plays somewhat slower. Of course, "somewhat slower" is relative — *The Manager's Challenge* is faster than many other PC baseball games. And if you get bored, you can let the computer finish the game for you in a matter of seconds.

Computer-controlled play, in fact, is an option throughout the game. You can play an entire series by setting your teams and letting the computer play the games out.



You get a variety of classic teams from which to select. The '27 Yankees — with Ruth and Gehrig — look like a good choice.

This takes only a few seconds, and the updated stats will affect team performance in subsequent games.

The Manager's Challenge includes a Stat Compiler program which is a complete league-creation system — you can add teams (or bring them in from add-on disks available from MicroLeague), shift teams among divisions, and then play entire seasons into the playoffs.

Despite the impressive statistical capabilities, however, the success of a computer baseball game lives or dies with its simulation of on-field play. Animated graphics and a play-by-play announcer (screen text, not speech synthesis) give *The Manager's Challenge* the feel of a real-life game. However, once you set the play in motion from the game's many menus, you have no direct control over the animated players.

The Manager's Challenge is filled with realistic choices. For example, when your team is on the field, you set your pitches and position your defense. You can play the outfield shallow, deep, aggressively (your fielders always try to gun down runners, but risk making throwing errors), or "to pull" (anticipating the batter to pull the ball down the right or left field line). Infielders can be set to anticipate a pull, to guard the lines, to watch for an opposite-field hit, play in at the corners, or play in all the way.

For your pitcher, you can select a normal pitch, an intentional walk, a pick-off attempt, or a pitch-out. You can also choose to pitch aggressively or around the batter. When you're ready to throw, you're taken to a second menu, from which you choose a type of pitch.



Hoyt has several pitching options available. Try his specialty pitch to see if it fools the batter.

Pitch location is important because batters will be guessing where the next pitch will be thrown. This, too, is realistic — and realism is the intent throughout *The Manager's Challenge*. Whether you're selecting a specialty pitch, warming up a reliever, or ordering your runners to try for an extra base if the ball is hit to a specific field, you feel very much like a manager in this game. Better graphics would help this game's mass appeal, but for a fine-playing, statistically oriented game, you can't go wrong with *The Manager's Challenge*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; EGA, CGA VGA, or MCGA graphics.

STELLAR 7

STEPHEN POOLE

If you were an arcade junkie in the early '80s (like myself), you'll probably get a strong feeling of *deja vu* the first time you load up *Stellar 7*. In it, you maneuver a forward-firing, land-based assault vehicle, destroying any enemies you encounter while avoiding counterfire and troublesome obstacles. The action takes place from a first-person perspective, and you can move forward, backward, left, or right, and rotate clockwise and counterclockwise.

Sound familiar? It does if you ever played *Battlezone*, a huge arcade hit several years back. Then again, if you were more interested in the nascent world of computer gaming, you may have played the original *Stellar 7*. As **Dynamix**'s debut release back in 1983, *Stellar 7* borrowed a lot from *Battlezone*—not a bad choice, since *Battlezone* was so realistic that the U.S. Army used it to train its tank crews. *Stellar 7* eventually became a cult classic on the PC, Apple II, and C64.



The Briefing screen provides an overview of Draxon's forces. Study it carefully to determine the best tactics against each craft.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; supports sound boards; mouse and joystick optional.

For the new PC version of *Stellar 7*, Dynamix has taken all the ingredients that made its predecessor such a favorite — simple game play, smooth animation, and lifelike perspective — and topped them off with some of the best graphics you'll see in a shooter. The result is a game that draws you completely into every battle, not just once but every time you sit down at your keyboard. And one of the main reasons *Stellar 7* succeeds so well is that the designers have kept things simple, allowing you to concentrate on the tactical and strategic decisions that you must make minute by minute.

Even the story explaining why you're fighting is kept to a reasonable minimum. Gir Draxon, Supreme Overlord of the Arcturan Empire, is readying an armada to destroy the Earth. Why? Because he's *evil*, and the Earth looks like an easy target. Isn't that reason enough? Your mission: to travel through seven star systems, engage the enemy on a planet in each system, and ultimately enter the Arcturan system for a showdown with Draxon himself.



Docking at a fuel bay brings your shields to full strength and returns your provision of Inviso Cloak Modules to full. You can't dock if you're already cloaked, however.

You pilot the Raven, an assault vehicle propelled by antigravity generators and loaded with firepower. The Raven's basic weapon is a biphasal thunder cannon, but it's also equipped with several other weapon modules (you can use up to three at once.) Among these are the Super Cannon, which fires a rapid volley of shells twice as powerful as the standard cannon shell; the Eel Shield, which destroys most enemies on contact; and the RC Bomb, a futuristic land mine that detonates when any enemy comes within 12 meters.

You'll encounter a wide variety of enemies, over 20 kinds in all. If you manage to defeat all the forces on a planet, you face a Guardian, the equivalent of a stage boss. These vary from planet to planet, and range from gigantic Stalkers that walk upright to Arachnotrons that spin deadly traps and release "young" that make a beeline for your craft.

It may not sound like this game is much different from a score of other shooters. But in the case of *Stellar 7*, seeing is truly believing. The animation is so realistic that you may find yourself actually ducking and swaying in your seat to dodge shots. The game creates an incredibly true sense of motion, as enemy craft maintain the proper spatial relationship and speed as you move around them. And the background graphics (particularly VGA) create a sense of deep space that's awfully convincing. *Stellar 7* is simple, addictive, and absorbing — what more can you ask for in a game?

GP

BUSHBUCK CHARMS, VIKING SHIPS & DODO EGGS

GARY MEREDITH

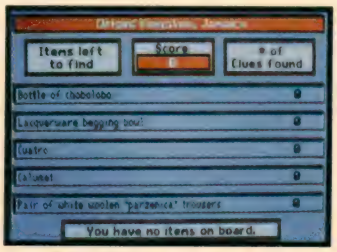
Much work has gone into preparation for Questival, the international scavenger hunt that brings together the world's best collectors. The consensus is that this year's hunt, in 2010 A.D., will be the most exciting one yet. Although you're ready for the challenge, you can't help but think that there's always the chance something could go wrong at the last minute. Sure enough, just as Questival is about to begin, word arrives that the nefarious Otto von Slinkenrat has made off with the treasures. He's scattered them all over the world, insuring that only he can retrieve them — to put in his own collection, of course.

In *Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs*, from **PC Globe**, it's up to you to thwart Otto's plans, while competing in the Questival against some of the toughest competition anywhere. You can play by yourself, against another human player, or against one of three computer opponents (one for each difficulty level). Should you find the courage to compete in the expert class, you'll put your reputation on the line against Otto von Slinkenrat himself.

A game starts with each contestant being given a list of five items to retrieve. Most of these objects are quite esoteric, so you can forget about searching for things like a paving stone from the front walk of the Taj Mahal or the clapper from the Liberty Bell. Snakeskin shampoo, a poda-poda tire, or an olive press are the stuff of this scavenger hunt, and the items become more arcane as the difficulty level increases. To make things more challenging, the clues are often as obscure as the articles you're searching for.

Depending on the level of difficulty, each contestant is given between 40 and 60 airline tickets to use in the search. Occasionally you'll find extra tickets, and you can earn bonus tickets for bringing back items in good condition. But you still must budget your tickets carefully, because there's always the possibility you'll have to retrace your steps. There's also the chance that you'll run into bad weather on a flight, which could cause you to forfeit several tickets. And remember that an item can be damaged when carried through a storm, resulting in a deduction from your score when you present your find to the judges.

The basic strategy in *Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs* is to search for the most familiar object on your list, while trying to pick up clues for the other items as the game progresses. Sometimes the items on your list are so obscure that you have no idea of their origins. In these cases, you'll have to devise search strategies based on language hints or historical time periods. A good desktop encyclopedia is a must for success.



The items you must retrieve aren't exactly of the everyday variety — you'll soon discover that some sort of reference book is a must.

If you think all this seems familiar, you're right. Broderbund, with its hugely successful Carmen Sandiego series, was unlikely to keep the educational adventure-game genre to itself forever, and *Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs* is an impressive entry into the field. The graphics aren't quite as nice as those in the latest adventures of Ms. Sandiego, but *Bushbuck Charms* sports an easy-to-use interface that gives the game a lot of appeal. Throw in a nice sense of humor, a very good soundtrack, and you have one of the best educational games we've seen to date.

GP



The world's your oyster, although pearls probably won't be on your scavenging list. Because of the large number of possible destinations, game play is very open-ended.

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA graphics; Ad Lib sound board supported; mouse recommended.

LEXI-CROSS

LESLIE MIZELL

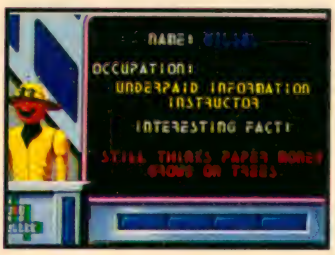


Some puzzles require you to uncover, word by word, a famous quote or popular saying.

OK, so watching Vanna turning letters on "Wheel of Fortune" isn't your idea of excitement. And the thought of playing a rousing game of Scrabble sends you into a deep snooze. Is *Lexi-Cross*, **Interplay**'s new release that's basically a combination of those two games, worth a try? Absolutely.

It's hard to pinpoint what makes *Lexi-Cross* so appealing. It's certainly not the gimmick. *Lexi-Cross* is a futuristic game show, complete with a robotic letter-turner and a host with a steady stream of patter. As a contestant, you can choose to be any one of a variety of characters from throughout the solar system.

It's a well-presented hook, but after you've seen it once you'll wish you could just get down to business. Since you can't, at least be glad some imagination went into creating the galactic characters. (Paula Abdul should be especially flattered, since one of the Earthlings you can choose bears a remarkable resemblance to her.)



In Lexi-Cross *there are dozens of intergalactic characters from which to choose — men, women, and "other" sexes.*

You and your opponent — human or robotic — are each given a 15 x 10 grid, and you alternate uncovering squares on your own board. You continue turning pieces as long as you reveal letter squares or icons representing vowels, score additions, or "safe" squares (extra turns passed between contestants). The idea is to expose your own crossword puzzle, which contains the same words as your opponent's but in a different configuration.

Once you think you've uncovered enough words, you spin a wheel for point values, then guess letters in the puzzle. The first player to solve the puzzle wins the round, and the player with the highest score after three rounds goes on to the bonus game.

Most of the puzzles are common-theme puzzles. If you uncover "blank," "inspiration," "gun," "brownie," and so on, the answer is the word that comes before or after these words — "point." But the puzzle could be a list, with the category as the answer. If you know your stuff, you'll realize that "Ben Gurion," "John Wayne," "JFK," and "O'Hare" are airports, not famous men.

There are also literal puzzles (as well as an option for anagrams), but they don't appear as often. To solve these puzzles, you must uncover the words in a well-known phrase, such as "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." These puzzles are more difficult than common-theme puzzles because the words tend to be shorter and are therefore trickier to uncover.

If you're playing against a robotic opponent, be prepared. Even on level 1 (dumb), the robots are no pushovers. They seem to find letter squares with amazing accuracy, and hardly ever hit "bankrupt" when they're spinning for letters. Worst of all, if they earn the chance to peek at a row, they can memorize the positions of all the icons and letters, but you can spot only one or two when you're given the same chance.

Robotic prowess aside, the best thing about *Lexi-Cross* is that the puzzles are genuinely challenging, even for experienced problem-solvers. The categories in *Lexi-Cross* range from "cheese" to "Fidel Castro," and the designers assume you know something about everything in between. You won't be seeing the same puzzle again and again, either. *Lexi-Cross* includes more than 600 puzzles, and you decide how soon they can start repeating — anywhere from 1-100 days. Puzzle fans will be pleased with *Lexi-Cross*, especially if they also like science-fiction imagery.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory for VGA or MCGA graphics, 512K for EGA or CGA; mouse optional; supports sound cards.

ARACHNOPHOBIA

JEFF LUNDRIGAN

Help! The town of Canaima and the surrounding county have become infested with an especially poisonous and nasty breed of spider. Who can handle a situation like this? The professionals at McClintock Infestation Management (MIM), of course. Man-eating spiders? No problem: McClintock professionals have the tools and the know-how to get the job done.

In *Arachnophobia*, a **Disney Software** release based on last year's movie, you're an MIM exterminator who's been given the job of saving the residents of Canaima — and the rest of the world — from arachnid domination. You move from house to house in each town you visit, killing spiders until you locate and destroy the Queen. Your goal is to track down the granddaddy of them all, the South American Spider.



Drive from house to house to exterminate the eight-legged menace. When you kill all the spiders in a house, it's crossed off the map.

You'll depend most on Toxi-Max, the "insecticide with an environmental conscience." One shot of this stuff and those eight-legged beasties curl up for the big sleep. You also have a limited supply of bug bombs, which kill every spider in a room. You can also use your MIM regulation-issue boots to stomp spiders. Even your uniform provides protection — it takes four spider bites to kill a McClintock man.

A Queen's egg sac is located somewhere in each house, and you have to keep searching until you find it. When you destroy an egg sac, the Queen screams commands to the soldier spiders. You can pick up her shrieks on your bugometer, a device which shows you what direction the sound came from. By eliminating sacs and following the bugometer, you track the Queen to her nest.



The flamethrower is a powerful weapon against the Queen, but you can't carry it between houses.

It takes multiple doses of Toxi-Max to kill a Queen, and a bug bomb only slows her down. You're better off constructing a flamethrower consisting of a spray can and matches, both of which you'll find in houses. But there are several catches: There's only one spray can in each town; if you have matches, the flamethrower is automatically assembled when you pick up the spray can; and you can only use a flamethrower in the house where it was assembled.

Because the house containing the Queen *always* has matches, you should avoid picking them up anywhere else for fear of constructing the flamethrower in the wrong house. This shifts the emphasis of the game: Instead of killing all the spiders in every single house, you figure out where the Queen is, then start looking for a spray can. Since you're awarded an extra bug bomb when you clear a house, it doesn't hurt to visit a few extra homes anyway. But it's not necessary for finding and killing the Queen.

Character response in *Arachnophobia* is sluggish, a problem common to many arcade-style PC games. On the plus side, *Arachnophobia* supports the Disney-designed Sound Source, an add-on sound module, and this adds much to the game. A digitized voice keeps up a running commentary, shouting out things like, "The cavalry has arrived" and "Sit on a tuffet!" There's also theme music from the movie, and lots of background noise — phones ring, dogs bark, doors creak — to give the game a nice touch of realism.

Without the Sound Source, however, the game is pretty thin (no other sound cards are supported). In fact, your interest can wane rather quickly even with the Sound Source. The spiders grow progressively faster and more aggressive, and the game becomes more difficult, but nothing really *different* happens. *Arachnophobia* is colorful and entertaining, but the enjoyment just doesn't last.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K with Sound Source); VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy-16 color graphics; joystick supported.

LIGHTSPEED

GARY MEREDITH



Some of the aliens you meet are quite approachable, while others entertain such visions of their own grandeur that they will rarely, if ever, deign to enter into a trade agreement.

We should have listened to the warnings back in the twentieth century. Now the earth is a desolate orb, stripped of its resources and shrouded in the toxic efflux of untold generations' waste. A new home for humanity must be found. As commander of a Trailblazer space dreadnought, it's your task to scout ahead for the huge Conestoga colony ships, each of which carries ten million people.

Your primary concern is to find new planets for humanity. While there are a few uninhabited solar systems, most of them are not fit for colonization. They can, however, be mined for valuable resources. Other systems, unfortunately, are inhabited by non-human entities, some of whom can be downright unsociable. The interaction with these other races is what makes **MicroProse's** *Lightspeed* so enjoyable. In many ways it's similar to the popular *Starflight* series — but it places more emphasis on arcade action and uses perhaps a simpler approach to the diplomatic side of human-alien relations. To be sure, you can trade with, or obtain information from, many of the aliens you meet. Others, however, seem to respond only to threats of force or actual aggression.

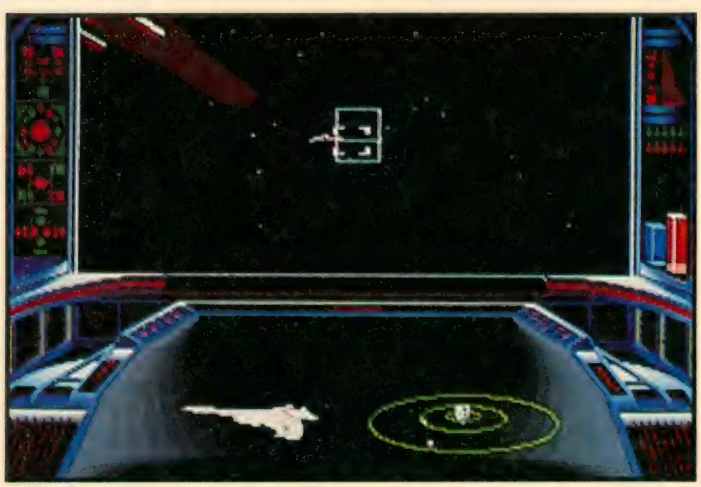
Because you often have no other recourse but to fight, you'll want to upgrade your ship's armaments and propulsion systems as often as possible. All your upgrades must be accomplished either through trade or conquest. If an alien insists on fighting you and is destroyed, you may be able to pick up some useful items from the debris. You can't get any vital information from an alien who has just been turned into space dust by your blaster, though, so trade for upgrades whenever possible.

Space battles, for better or worse, are part of the territory. Although you need to upgrade your ship's weaponry at every opportunity, your basic arsenal is fairly potent. The Trailblazer is equipped with a number of missiles and subsidiary gun turrets, but the main blaster serves as your not-so-gentle persuader. Even when all your other weapons have been put out of action, you'll still be able to fire up the blaster, although substantial damage may cause it to recharge much more slowly than normal. If you know that a fight is inevitable, it's best to initiate hostilities. Go straight for the main ship — if there is one — and try to get close enough to use the main blaster in case your other weapons fail.

Lightspeed is less frustrating than some other games in its genre. For one thing, you cannot die in battle. If you find yourself in an untenable position, surrounded by unfriendlies and with all systems out, just jump into your escape pod and you're back at the mothership. Not only that, but you're re-equipped with a brand-new scout ship. You'll retain all of the resources you've mined, although you'll be relieved of your acquired equipment upgrades. While purists may cite this feature as a defect, other players will welcome it.

The sound (for those with sound boards) is quite good, and the graphics are equally satisfying. While the 3-D space scenes are a bit blocky, the animation is very smooth. Also, some of the scenes in which you interact with aliens are stunning, with shifting colors and some very original creatures. And because of the game's open-ended design, there's no one right way to proceed. Several different tacks are possible, making *Lightspeed* a game to be enjoyed time and time again.

GP

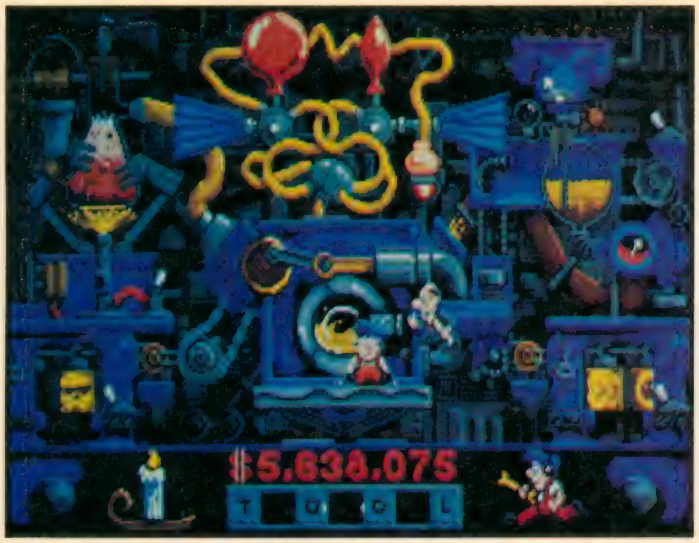


The galaxy can be a pretty unfriendly place, especially when you're looking for a handout. You'll discover that combat is an unfortunate, but regular, part of galactic life.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; Roland and AdLib sound boards supported; joystick and mouse optional.

NIGHT SHIFT

WAYNE KAWAMOTO



This toy factory is a disaster waiting to happen. Your mission (and you've already accepted it) is to get this heap running and meet your quotas.

How exciting can a career in the toy industry possibly be? *Night Shift* proves that it's not what you might expect. The game puts you to work in a wacky toy factory that's, well, a mechanical engineer's worst nightmare. Making toys might sound like child's play, but in **LucasFilm's** *Night Shift* the process is a tough, chaotic, funny, and enjoyable arcade adventure.

You're the new employee at the Industrial Might and Logic Toy Factory, which makes action figures based on characters from the films of George Lucas. Here, you'll make toy storm troopers, as well as models of Indiana Jones, Obi Wan Kenobe, Luke Skywalker, and many more. Your unenviable job is to run the huge, enormously complicated toy machine, nicknamed "the beast," during the 9:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. night shift.

Your first task is to get the factory running. By being resourceful and by using various tools, you'll tighten loose screws, replug disconnected power cords, turn up the heat by adjusting furnaces, and generate power from a stationary bicycle.

Once you get the factory's machinery going, you'll have to concentrate on toy production. Your boss will want you to build a specified number of characters in different colors — for example, three red Luke Skywalkers and two blue Darth Vaders.

Meeting your quotas is essential to keeping your job. It's up to you to mix paints, choose the correct molds, check the conveyer belts, and make sure that pieces are assembled correctly.

Anything and everything goes wrong. Reversed conveyer belts dump your finished toys into the trash, mistimed assembly lines make dolls with two heads, and so on. It's all a mad dash at lightning speed because your quotas must be met in a very short time.

Night Shift offers a save game feature when you advance to new levels. This feature is nice to have, but it makes for especially tough playing if you jump in at the advanced levels — you're suddenly thrown into dealing with increasingly unreliable components and a greater number of toy orders.

As you would expect in a LucasFilm game, *Night Shift* has excellent animation and cartoon-quality graphics, particularly in VGA mode. If you have a sound board, you'll hear nice special effects and a catchy soundtrack.

At first, the game is overwhelming. But after a few shifts, things gradually start to fall into place. The game kindly includes a practice mode in which you can get a feel for the process without the pressure of time limits. Use it.

My joystick, which works with every game I have, would not stay calibrated with *Night Shift*. Fortunately, the game plays quite smoothly with keyboard controls.

The documentation is written in a light, readable style, but is interspered with missing letters — in the spirit of the game, no doubt, but a little annoying nonetheless. To reduce player trial and error, the manual could offer more explanation about the machine parts, or even include a map. Like the missing letters, these omissions were likely intended by the game designers.



Your boss says you must make the evening's quota: a yellow storm trooper, 13 blue Darth Vaders, and a host of other Lucas characters.

Overall, *Night Shift* is fun, but at times quite aggravating — not unlike those days at work where there are a million things to do and no time to do any of them.

If you're up to a stiff but fun-filled challenge, go ahead and apply for the job — no references necessary.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory for VGA and EGA graphics; 640K minimum memory for MCGA and Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick optional; AdLib and SoundBlaster sound cards supported.

GALLEONS OF GLORY

WILLIAM R. TROTTER



Off you go on a voyage of epic discovery. Uh-oh, what's that laughing Portuguese up to, over in the corner?

The premise of this new **Broderbund** game is intriguing. The time is 1519, and competition between Spain and Portugal is fierce. The player takes on the responsibilities of Captain-General Ferdinand Magellan, who set sail from Spain on September 20, entrusted with the task of finding the legendary *paso* — the ocean route to the Far East.

As if the dangers of weevilly bread, unreliable maps, disease, and shipwreck were not enough, the crew has been seeded with Portuguese spies and saboteurs, who will steal supplies, enflame the crew to mutiny, and generally make life exciting for Magellan and his loyal officers.

The object of the game is to navigate safely the entire eastern coastline of South America, exploring, mapping, and trading as you go, until you discover the long-sought passage to the Pacific. There's a time limit: If you don't succeed in your mission before the winter storm season hits, you'll probably end up on the rocks somewhere near the Falkland Islands.

Does this sound like a role-playing game to you? Well, it isn't, or at least it isn't much of one. Basically, it's a resource-management game in which you must determine the precise balance between discipline and compassion, the right moment to go ashore and make repairs, the right time to replenish the food stocks, and so on.

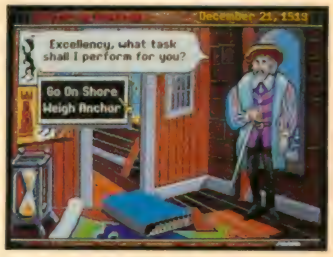
At the easiest level (Concepcion: An Easy Voyage), the crises manifest themselves with predictable regularity: sails get worn, the hull gets foul, the fresh water runs short, and one of your officers keeps causing trouble. Once you know how the game is played, it's fairly easy to ward off trouble just by using common sense and good timing.

On the hardest level (Trinidad: May God Be with You), everything that can go wrong, will. If you can't head off a mutiny by fingering the ringleader, you'll end the game marooned on some God-forsaken sandspit with nothing but a barrel of hardtack and a canteen, watching your ship sail into the distance.

Most of the game is played on shipboard. The point-and-click interface could not be easier to use: Click once to go from one part of the ship to another, click again to speak to one of the officers available for consultation at that location, and click again to issue orders.

You'll need to put ashore at any likely looking inlet in order to trade with the natives (and hopefully cheat them out of any loose gold or spices they may have lying about), resupply your food and water, and do maintenance on your vessel. Knowing when and where to go ashore is a key to success in this game. Areas that appear to have the most vegetation are usually choice spots.

Each man you talk to can supply you with shipboard scuttlebutt. But when speaking with the various officers, remember that some of them are just telling you what they think you want to hear, and some may have hidden agendas.



Issuing orders to your officers is a cinch, thanks to the simple interface. Just make sure they're the right orders at the right time.

This is, at times, a clever and diverting game, but its potential for long-term enjoyment seems limited. Even though the coastline and the order of events are randomized each time you play, the range of things that happen is fairly narrow. The role-playing element is shallow and one-dimensional, and the cartoony graphics look like something left over from an old Sierra game.

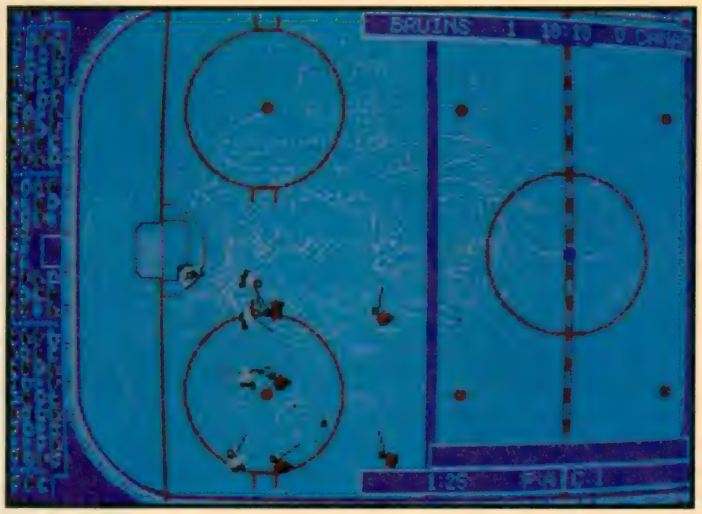
Still, *Galleons of Glory* is easy to learn and fun to play...for a while.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, MCGA, CGA, and Hercules graphics; supports Ad Lib, Soundblaster, Covox, and Tandy sound boards.

WAYNE GRETZKY HOCKEY 2

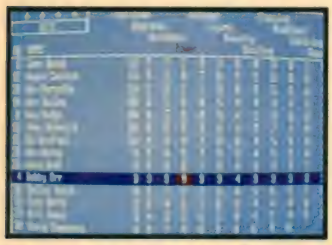
NEIL RANDALL



From the face-off during a Montreal power play, the puck slides back toward the defenseman for a shot.

This newly released sequel is a significant upgrade of its highly acclaimed predecessor. *Wayne Gretzky Hockey 2*, from **Bethesda Softworks**, includes a number of improvements in play that make for even truer hockey simulation. Essentially, though, it's the same game, with the same overhead perspective and the same strengths and weaknesses.

First, let's note the weaknesses, because there aren't many. The most important one is lack of shot control. Hockey players spend a fair portion of their lives mastering different kinds of shots, and a well-rounded player can execute a fast, accurate wrist shot, slap shot, snap shot, and backhand, with several varieties of each. In addition, players strive for accuracy. *Gretzky 2* lets you shoot, but it doesn't let you aim for the corners of the net or perform such vital moves as faking a slap shot or taking a wrist shot. This is the only important feature missing, and it's missing largely because the game is rendered two-dimensionally (from directly above the ice).



The stats for Bobby Orr show how dominant this great Boston defenseman was in his prime. You can add your own teams, but the stats are numerous and difficult to estimate.

The only other weakness is more of a personal quibble concerning design. Shooting the puck at the net is difficult, because you must first move the cursor to the net. I'd rather use the left mouse button for passing and the right for shooting, assuming that the player will always shoot for the net.

The enormous strengths of *Gretzky 2* are the real issue here. None of the features from the original are gone, and all the enhancements are significant. Now you can manually change lines, including substitution of individual players on specific lines. *Gretzky 2* now features three referees, each with his own penalty-calling obsessions. At the end of the game you now automatically see the highlights of the goals scored, and you can save other interesting plays for later replay. The sequel also supports both AdLib and Sound Blaster boards.

Other improvements deserve mention. *Gretzky 2* contains a play editor, much like those found in other computer sports games. It's not widely recognized that hockey, with all its speed and apparent chaos, is made up of set plays, but good coaching consists chiefly of making such plays work. You can now create up to 16 plays per team. This feature dramatically increases the realism of the coaching portion of the game.

There are more improvements. In the original game, two players could compete only against each other. In *Gretzky 2*, you and a friend can play on the same team. In the original, team play was predictable, whereas now you can order your team to pass more often or dump the puck in and chase it. Most importantly, the computer now plays much more intelligently. No longer do computer players pass the puck without ever attempting a shot, and they move into far better positions on the ice than before. Finally, the game recognizes the new offside rules.

If there's a true criticism, it's that the game comes with only two teams, the 1972 Boston Bruins and the 1972 Montreal Canadiens. If you want to coach Wayne, you'll have to order one of the separate team disks from Bethesda.

To my mind, *Gretzky* remains the most impressive sports simulation on the market, if only because hockey is notoriously difficult to simulate. *Gretzky 2* shows that Bethesda's designers are committed to a very fine product. Let's hope they continue to bring it to perfection. **GP**

Hardware requirements: 384K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy graphics; mouse and joystick optional; supports AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards.

DINOWARS

LISA M. BOUCHEY

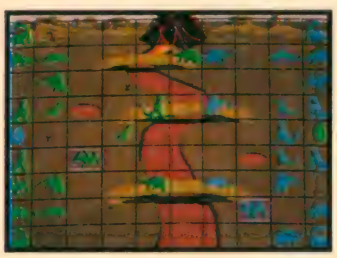


An action-arcade battle feature places opponents face-to-face in a test of strength and reflexes. Like a prehistoric prize-fight, a clock ticks away as scores are tallied and the battle roars on.

Remember going through a phase when you couldn't learn enough about dinosaurs? It seems that, at some point in their lives, most everyone is fascinated with the prehistoric creatures--and many still are. If you're a wanna-be paleontologist who can't get enough of the "terrible lizards," **Digitek's** *DinoWars* is a game you've got to check out.

Based on the rather contrived premise that different species of dinosaurs banded together in social groups to stave off extinction, the game tells the story of two different dinosaur groups. The last hope of survival for each group depends on the birth of a new leader -- a dinosaur that incorporates the traits, fighting skills, and intelligence of the combined dinosaur races.

In a last-ditch attempt to ensure their survival, the two dinosaur armies have kidnapped each other's eggs. The game pits the armies against each other in a strategic battle to recover their eggs.



The strategy board game pits opposing dinosaur armies against each other in a battle to rescue a kidnapped dinosaur egg -- only the strong survive here.

Before you get too engrossed in battle, though, take a look at the game's on-disk encyclopedia. The encyclopedia provides information on a variety of topics, from different theories of dinosaur extinction to an explanation of continental drift.

The encyclopedia does have its weak points. It includes outdated names for dinosaur species (the Brontosaurus species was renamed the Apatosaurus several years ago). And it claims that the Dimetrodon lived in what is now Texas, even though it's generally accepted that the Dimetrodon was dominant throughout North America. But if you need to know whether or not the Stegosaurus can swim or if the Triceratops stands a chance against the Tyrannosaurus, the encyclopedia is very handy.

Before beginning a war, you must select one of five terrains on which to play. A 9-by-10 square playing board is superimposed over the terrain you select. The terrain you choose (river, volcanic, jungle, desert, or chess) determines the movement capabilities of each dinosaur. A nonaquatic dinosaur, for example, would not fare well in a river terrain. The Rank Screen Editor lets you customize the board game and choose which dinosaurs will make up your army.

The game is won by reclaiming the captured egg or by eliminating the opponent's army. Players move their dinosaurs across the board toward the enemy, much like a game of chess. If two opposing dinosaurs try to occupy the same square, the screen switches from an overhead view to a side view of the battle. After a fight to the death, the victor claims the square and continues the march toward the egg. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of each of your dinosaurs is crucial to your success.

For players who want an arcade-style alternative to the strategy board game, there's a battle game option that places opponents in a one-on-one combat situation where you'll see lots of chomping, snapping, and clawing.

The game's graphics are adequate, but DigiTek has done a particularly nice job with the VGA mode. Hard drive installation is recommended (juggling seven disks gets a bit tiring), but you won't need a joystick or mouse -- the game can be played easily with keyboard controls. Most importantly, though, the strategy board game and battle sequences are fun, especially if you're a dinosaur fan.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory (640K for EGA and VGA graphics); VGA, EGA, Tandy 16-color, and CGA graphics; supports sound boards; mouse and joystick optional.

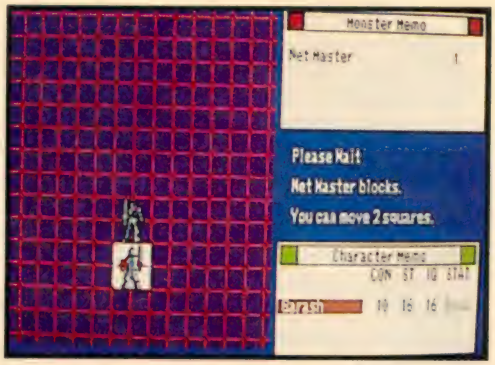
TUNNELS AND TROLLS:
CRUSADERS OF KHAZAN

NEIL RANDALL

It's fantasy role-playing time again, with a direct descendant of the Wizardry tradition. *Tunnels and Trolls* comes by this heritage honestly, however, its parent game having been one of the first competitors of the original Dungeons and Dragons. But while *T&T* didn't do all that well as a paper role-playing game, it should do just fine in the computer FRP arena, especially for those who like the monsters-and-treasures brand of adventure.

New World Computing is the same group that publishes the Might and Magic series, but *T&T* is significantly different from that series. In fact, *T&T* is among the growing number of FRP games that emphasize an overhead view and a simple interface, as opposed to M&M's (and Wizardry's and Advanced Dungeons & Dragons') first-person perspective and rich but complex interface. What this game tries to do is offer an easy-to-play multi-character game, something we've seen far too little of.

You begin by creating characters, of course, but even this is quite simple. There are only four races (human, elf, dwarf, and hobb) and three character classes (warrior, rogue, and wizard). What there are lots of, by contrast, are languages. Everyone knows the Common tongue, but Elven must be learned by everyone but elves, Dwarvish by all but dwarves, and so on. You'll have to learn Orcish to communicate with orcs, Foulspeak to hear from ogres or trolls, Elysian to make small talk with merfolk, centaurs, manticores and the like, and other tongues to get information from reptiles, dogs, and even eels. Languages have always been poorly handled in both fantasy games and books, but *T&T*'s effective and fascinating system is a step in the right direction.



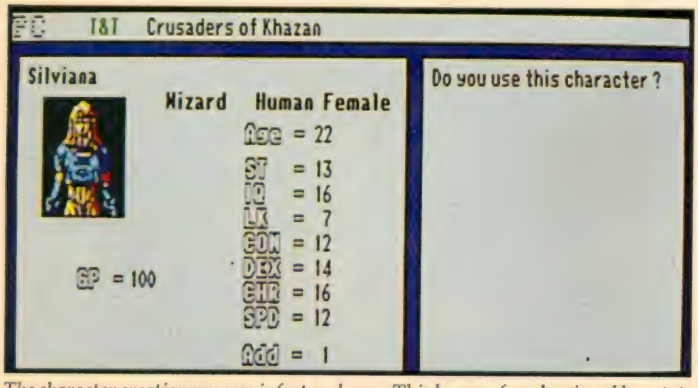
This one-on-one combat shows the tactical battle display. Usually there will be more characters, but the options remain the same.

Like virtually all FRP games, *T&T* is based on exploration. You make your way around each city, buying items and learning skills and spells, then leave the city to explore the large, populous countryside. Your goal is to free the wizard Khazan so that he can lend his might in the battle against evil, but you will encounter myriad dangers along the way. You fight using *T&T*'s tactical combat system, which gives you control over each individual character. This system is both quick and effective, and some battles are quite exciting. There's far too much fighting in this game, but that's a problem inherent to the genre and one that has only recently begun to be addressed.

Wizards have six levels of spells — from one that opens a locked door to one that levitates allies, creates mirages, and summons elementals. For warriors, *T&T* offers 13 possible armor acquisitions and nearly 50 different weapons. Each weapon has its own attribute requirements, as do some of the armor pieces, and some are extremely expensive.

T&T offers a highly attractive, extremely usable interface. The graphics in its overhead view are often unspectacular, but the interface itself is very appealing. With all the side quests offered your adventurers, and the speed of game play, it is a rich, solid role-playing effort despite its lack of inventiveness. If you're an FRP buff, or you're looking for a place to start, you won't be disappointed.

GP



The character creation process is fast and easy. This human female wizard has stats that suit her for just about any available skill.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; EGA, CGA, or Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse optional.

BATTLETECH:
THE CRESCENT HAWK'S REVENGE

NEIL RANDALL

Based on the FASA Corporation's BattleTech series, **Infocom's** second BattleTech installment is much different from its predecessor. *BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Inception*, the series' debut game, is essentially an RPG. The follow-up consists of a sequence of battle scenarios. In each scenario you must move to certain locations and defeat a specified number of enemies, and you must complete each set of scenarios before moving on in the overall story.



There are six possible Mechs you can command. Note that each has its own characteristics.

The story itself follows the plot begun in the first game. You are still Jason Youngblood, and you're still trying to rescue your father from the House of Kurita. You've travelled with your lance of four BattleMechs to the planet Lyons and hooked up with the mercenary Mech regiment known as the Kell Hounds. As soon as you land, you're in command.

The game's manual gets you started quickly, guiding you through the first two scenarios, and by the time you've completed them you're ready to proceed on your own. The scenarios grow progressively more difficult, and after completing a set of six you move on to the next set. Each scenario is actually a tactical battle situation in which you and your Mechs maneuver skillfully in order to defeat enemy infantry, vehicles, Mechs, and even aircraft. The game provides an overhead map view and a number of moving and fighting commands that give you full control over your Mechs.

You can operate your Mech at walking or running speed, or you can order it to stop in place. Running speed is obviously better in certain situations, but causes the Mech to build up heat more quickly, and overheating is fatal. With the Move command, place the highlighted square where you want the Mech to stop (including various "legs" along the way) and press Enter. The Mech will make its way to the destination you've specified.



You can expect this kind of graphics detail at various points in the game. The actual play graphics aren't as sharp, however.

The best approach — for starters at least — is to order your Mech to fire defensively. When you know you have to take out a number of enemies, select Fire at Will. If you need to conserve ammunition, give orders not to fire at all. The targeting procedure gives you even greater control, as you can specify which enemy unit you want each Mech to concentrate on. The default is defensive fire, by the way, so your Mechs aren't going to get blown away just because you forgot to tell them what to do.

You have ground vehicles to command in later scenarios, and after a certain stage in the game (the year 3052) the scenarios include dropships. These invaluable craft orbit the planet, providing you with reconnaissance, firepower, and strafing and barraging capabilities. Learn your way around the dropship well—you'll need all of its assistance.

What's especially nice about *The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* is the manner in which you're led through scenarios of increasing complexity. As you move through the scenarios you develop a real sense that the war on Lyons is escalating, a fact that becomes very apparent with the appearance of the dropships. Between scenarios you receive situation updates along with new briefings; the updates verify the degree to which the war is escalating.

No single scenario takes an overwhelming amount of time to play, but the sheer number of scenarios makes the game last a long time. *The Crescent Hawk's Revenge* takes the BattleTech into a territory far different from the original installment, but it's a positive direction indeed.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; hard drive; VGA, MCGA, EGA, Tandy 16-color graphics; supports all major sound boards; supports mouse.

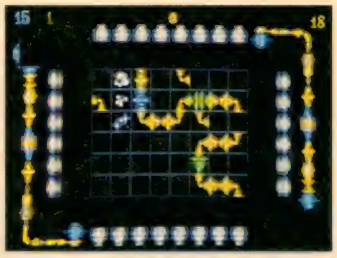
TROIKA

LESLIE MIZELL

Does an arcade game in which you blast alien spaceships sound familiar? How about a puzzle game where you connect sections of pipe by placing them over a grid, or another in which you must find your way out of a series of mazelike rooms?

All of these sound like games you've either played or heard about. Despite first impressions, *Troika*, from **Paragon**, is not a rehash of tired game themes. Soviet game designer Dima Pavlovsky has taken three familiar motifs and built such user-friendly games around them that even people who hate puzzle or arcade games will enjoy themselves.

For example, in "Rebel Planets," you pilot a spaceship and shoot missiles at alien spaceships, satellites, and creatures on three different planets. Although you get zapped back to the start of the game if you crash all your spaceships, that probably won't happen often. Why? Because "Rebel Planets" is chock-full of opportunities to pick up extra lives. You can win an extra life — sometimes more — on at least two-thirds of the screens.



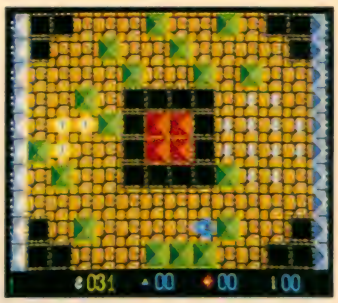
Build a pipeline around the blue and green generators in "Metal Hearts," then send a bomb down the line to destroy your work.

In many arcade games, you never get to see the upper levels because you can't get past the first stages. Not so in "Rebel Planets." If you've got the patience, you can learn the passwords for the two upper planets, Telt and Heff, just by watching the demo game for Rita, the first planet. As long as you're playing on at least Fighter (medium) speed, you can use the passwords to skip to Telt and Heff.

Troika's second game, "Metal Hearts," is much like Lucasfilm's *Pipe Dream*. Blue and green generators are randomly placed on a 48-square grid. When pieces of pipe enter the grid from the corners of the screen, you place them so that they connect to the generators. Once a pipeline is completed, you send a bomb into the line, which destroys the pipes and the generators.

Here again, many games of this kind would give you a paltry number of bombs per level, and the game would end if you used them up. But in "Metal Hearts" you have a quite generous supply of bombs. Even if the worst happens, you can use the stage-select option to return to the same room (although you lose any accumulated points).

In "Ivan's Time Machine," you guide a rotund little alien though a series of mazelike rooms, helping him advance by moving blocks or flipping tiles until he reaches the exit. Standing between two same-colored blocks or venturing too near a laser generator is fatal, but there aren't too many other ways to die.



Watch out for same-colored blocks in "Ivan's Time Machine." If you step between two green or two red squares, you'll be cooked to a crisp.

As in "Rebel Planets," you can pick up pointers from the long demo. And if you're accidentally incinerated, you can begin that room again without losing any power boosters or money.

It's possible that die-hard arcade enthusiasts might find the graphically lackluster *Troika* somewhat dull. On the other hand, if you like playing arcade games but don't enjoy the accompanying frustration, *Troika* is for you.

GP



In "Rebel Planets " you shoot alien spaceships and creatures on three different planets.

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA or EGA graphics; mouse and joystick optional; supports Roland and Ad Lib sound cards.

THEME PARK MYSTERY

GARY MEREDITH

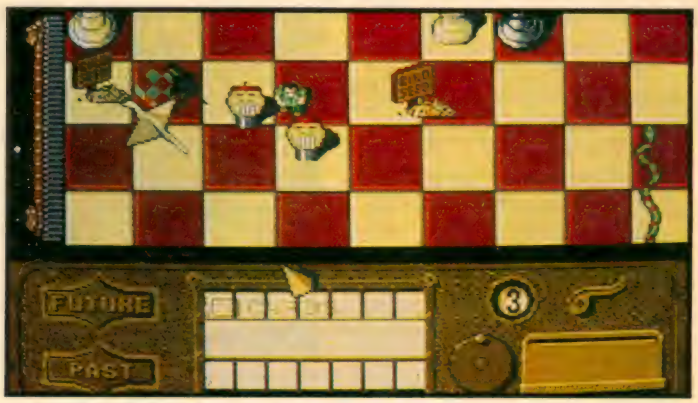
Amusement parks are supposed to be full of people being amused. A sense of amusement, however, is the last thing you feel as you enter the gates of the Magic Canyon Theme Park. A previous visit to your uncle's park found the place teeming with visitors, a veritable beehive of activity. Now, the streets, the rides, and the arcades are dead — as dead as your uncle, who took his own life as he grappled with the madness that drove him into an asylum. He was the last person to investigate the mystery of Magic Canyon, but now you, too, risk your sanity and your life.

With that ominous little prologue, *Theme Park Mystery*, from **Konami**, takes you into a twisted world on a quest to discover the truth behind the evil doings at Magic Canyon. But things aren't totally gloomy. What you really have here is an entertaining collection of arcade games strung together with a decidedly sinister storyline. The basic premise of the game is that you visit the four warped worlds of the Magic Canyon Theme Park — Yesterdayland, Dragonland, Dreamland, and Futureland — to recover eight gremlins and return them to the mysterious clairvoyant Zoltan.



The monorail is your method of travel to all four lands in the Magic Canyon Theme Park. To ride it, you'll first have to get a pass from Zoltan.

You first meet Zoltan in Yesterdayland, where he inhabits the fortune-telling slot machine. Once you unjam the machine's mechanism, Zoltan will give you some hints to get you started, as well a pass for the Monorail of Fear. Although you don't have to play the adjacent bagatelle machine right away, it can be a source of coins and tokens which you may need later on in the game. The third slot machine in Yesterdayland, The Grabber, contains one of the gremlins you need to recover, but you're probably better off waiting until later to play it.



Your ability to think outside logical norms will be tested in Dreamland. There are two gremlins and a monorail pass to Futureland you'll need to find here.

After you receive the monorail pass from Zoltan, you're off to Dragonland, where your first order of business should be to find the sleep potion that will take you to Dreamland. Unless you already have the Dreamland timer card, you won't be able to remain in Dreamland for long, but it's still a good idea to visit there and find out what you'll be up against. Back in Dragonland, you need to find the casket where the eight gremlins will eventually be held.

Once you're able to stay in Dreamland for an extended period, you'll discover the true nature of the place. Many things are not as they seem, and objects which might seem useless at first glance could prove extremely valuable when you pick them up. Dreamland is cast as a chessboard, and it's here that much of the mystery of Magic Canyon is revealed.

Futureland is where you'll find most of the gremlins (disguised as floating balls) and encounter the Rollercreeper, a coaster ride to end all coaster rides. It's important that you keep an eye on your shield strength while you're in Futureland, since you'll have a lot of enemy ships thrown at you once you hop aboard the Rollercreeper. Fortunately, you can replenish your shield by picking up the debris of destroyed ships.

The puzzles of *Theme Park Mystery* will keep you guessing, while the arcade sequences will test your reflexes to the max. This is an engrossing game, with graphics and a sense of humor that make for a refreshing change of pace.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; joystick or mouse recommended.

CALIFORNIA GAMES II

RICHARD LASHLEY

If you remember **Epyx**, you've been a computer gamer for at least a few years. In the 1980s, Epyx was one of the top computer entertainment houses in volume sales and in industry awards.

California Games was one of Epyx's most successful products, a number-one bestseller in both the U.S. and Europe. Epyx grossed $38 million in sales in 1988, but a year later, much to the surprise and dismay of many, the company all but vanished.



Hang gliding over Fort Funston is both fun and dangerous. Wait until the wind sock signals an onshore breeze, then launch yourself into the sky.

Now Epyx has reemerged on the PC scene with *California Games II* — and it looks like they've got a winner. This sequel should please anyone who enjoyed *California Games*.

The first thing you notice about *California Games II* is its nicely designed, cartoonlike graphics—particularly in VGA mode. It's soon apparent that Epyx did its homework. You quickly get the intended mood as you enter the carefree world of California beach life.

California Games II looks good, and it's also genuinely fun to play. There are five competitive events: snowboarding, jet surfing, hang gliding, body boarding, and skateboarding. You and up to seven other competitors can practice each event, then compete to see who'll become Supreme Dude of California.

Each of the events is exciting, but the hang gliding and skateboarding segments are particularly good. In the hang gliding event, you're treated to a panoramic view of San Francisco's Fort Funston. Pay close attention to the wind sock on the cliff from which you launch, then take off when the sock shows an onshore breeze. After you take that big step off the cliff, you have 90 seconds in which to perform stunts, drop water balloons on three floating targets, and then return for a landing on the cliff — easier said than done.

Search for the thermals (updrafts of warm air) near the face of the cliff to keep you soaring. Score quick points by attempting as many loops as possible, and get as much altitude as possible before releasing your water balloons toward the floating targets.

Although every event has its appeal, skateboarding is perhaps the finest. You enter one of California's empty aqueducts to do some heavy shredding. The course is a series of pipes where you skate against time, perform stunts, and — most importantly — try to stay alive.



In the jet surfing event, you can choose from a variety of skis and courses. This course, Ramp-O-Mania, requires you to ski over ramps on your way to some high-flying stunts.

This event proves that a game can allow complicated moves without forcing you to memorize complex controls. For example, 360-degree aerials are done by rhythmically skating back and forth in the half-pipes until you get some air (jumping above the rim of the pipe). If your timing is right, your skater does some remarkably smooth twists in midair. You then move on to the full pipes to try the gravity-defying corkscrew stunt. This dizzying move is a true test of nerves. It's here, on the slick surfaces of the aqueducts, that you can prove that *you're* the Supreme Dude.

Simply put, *California Games II* is *a lot* of game. Its easy controls and well-rendered graphics ensure many action-packed hours of fun. A minor disappointment is the minimalist soundtrack (although a separate AdLib version of the game is available). But if you turn down the PC's annoying bleeps and turn up your favorite Beach Boys album, it's easy to lose yourself in this game's sun-drenched fun.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, Tandy 16-color, CGA or Hercules graphics; hard drive recommended; joystick optional.

STREET ROD 2: THE NEXT GENERATION

GARY MEREDITH

If you fantasize, or even if you used to fantasize, about classic Detroit muscle cars and all their variations, *Street Rod 2: The Next Generation* is for you. Cast in the same mold as the original *Street Rod*, this game sends you back to a time when Detroit iron ruled the roads.

Drag racing or road racing for money, pink slips, or just for the fun of it is the real name of the game. You're staked to money which you use to purchase a car and whatever performance enhancements you can afford. This presents you with your first strategy decision — do you want to buy the best car you can and depend on driving strategy to win money to improve your vehicle? Or do you want to purchase the cheapest clunker available with an eye toward modifying it with more expensive competition parts? If you're careful about picking the cars you race against, you can probably be more successful with a late-model, unmodified car (the latest model in this game is from 1969).



It's not exactly the interior of a Ferrari or Lamborghini, but then we're talking about an era when cars were blunt declarative statements, not delicate aphorisms.

As in real life, if a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. A good example of this is the rather enticing '63 Corvette that's priced unreasonably low. When you get this little cream puff home, you discover that the engine and the transmission are nearly shot. One quick start off the line in a drag race, and you'll be pushing the 'Vette back home. You also might exercise some caution in your dealings for spare parts. While these are mostly what they appear to be, there is still the matter of compatibility with the rest of your equipment (cars and computers aren't so different after all). It won't do you much good to race home with a shiny new four-barrel competition carburetor, only to discover that your manifold will accept only two-barrel carbs.

As in the original game, much of the action takes place in your garage, where you can work on your wonder machine, using your race winnings to buy the parts that will make your machine unbeatable. Pop the hood and you can tune the engine or replace various parts. The pointer icon becomes a wrench that you use to go through the same ministrations that a real mechanic goes through. The transmission, wheels, body, and paint can be modified in the same general fashion.

After you've tweaked your car to perfection, it's off to the local drive-in, where challengers parade by, just begging you to take them on. You race them over either a twisty country road or a clandestine drag strip just outside of town. Or, if you can wait, there are some slightly more legal competitions scheduled.

Street Rod 2: The Next Generation takes a different tack from most other recent high-revving driving simulations. The designers have sacrificed graphic refinement for smoother action with slower computers. And, with the garage work and the drive-in, they've offered considerably more than just driving. If your pulse quickens at the sight of a cherry '68 4-4-2 or a '64 Pontiac Goat, then *Street Rod 2* may cause severe circulatory stress.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory for EGA, CGA, and Hercules; 640K for Tandy 16-color graphics; mouse or joystick optional; supports Ad Lib sound board.



It's a fairly innocuous-looking '66 Ford Galaxie, but you can't tell what this guy's got under the hood. Still, the chances of beating him are better than if he'd shown up with a Firebird.

THUNDERSTRIKE

GARY MEREDITH



There are no soaps or sitcoms on TV entertainment — instead, life-and-death battles are waged.

When Dwight Eisenhower warned of the threat of an unchecked military-industrial complex, even he could never have imagined the madness depicted in *ThunderStrike* from **Live Studios**. By 2238, the entire earth rests uneasily beneath the control of the television networks and the defense industries. In the most elaborate spectacle ever staged, high-tech gladiators vie for ascendancy in a world where ratings points are the foundation of empires.

As a fighter pilot for MegaCorp Industries, you are one of those gladiators. Equipped with the latest attack fighters, you and dozens of other pilots skim the landscape looking for ground targets, drone fighters, and each other. While you also have your own ground installations to protect, your first priority should be the destruction of the drone generators. With these out of action, the referees can send no additional drone fighters into the arena. This leaves you free to clean up the leftovers and go on to the next arena.

Each of the five arenas consists of ten rounds, and each completed arena is logged into your battle record. This is an important feature, because if you die you can start at the last arena you completed. If you manage to clear all 50 rounds, you're awarded the title "Defender of the Ground."

You have a choice of five different ships, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The ThunderStrike 18 is a good all-around ship, for example, while the StrikeHornet 24 is a real slug, but the most maneuverable ship in the fleet. You'll want to choose wisely, by the way, since the craft you select is the one you must keep throughout the competition.



Everything you need to know is displayed on your fighter's cockpit panel. Your view is actually a TV broadcast picked up from one of the network drones that follow you.

Your decision will be based largely on whether you prefer to mix it up in close dogfighting, or to rely on speed to make quick hit-and-run attacks.

Keeping track of your shield integrity is crucial, because once your shields have dissipated, you're a sitting duck. You lose a bit of shield integrity each time you're hit by enemy fire or bump into a drone. Fortunately, your shields can be replenished when you destroy certain drones and pick up the pods that appear. Additional pods can be used to equip your ship with enhanced defenses, increased firepower, and short bursts of blazing speed.

The HUD (head-up display) and the instrument panel give you comprehensive information concerning not only the state of your own ship, but also the whereabouts of all other ships and installations. The attack radar and the MOR (main overview radar) are two devices with which you'll want to become quite familiar. The MOR does what its name implies, giving a complete view of the entire arena. It's especially useful for planning your overall strategy. The attack radar, on the other hand, displays what's in the immediate vicinity. Concerted use of both radars can give you an advantage over the rather mechanical movements of both the drones and the other competitors.

Thunderstrike is a real joy to play, whether you choose keyboard, mouse, or joystick. The landscape scrolls very smoothly, giving a realistic feeling of skimming the arena's surface. Both the animated figures and the land emplacements consist entirely of 3-D polygons, and are quite simple. The overall smoothness of the flying, however, makes imagining easy, and you quickly begin to feel as if you really are in the cockpit of a futuristic fighting craft. If you've never tried one of Live Studios' fine games, *Thunder-strike* is an excellent one with which to start.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA and EGA graphics; Ad Lib and Roland sound boards supported; mouse and joystick optional.

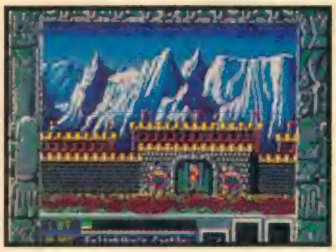
ZELIARD

MATT LAURENCE

In recent years, **Sierra** has brought several games from Japan to the U.S. for distribution. These titles are from Game Arts, and several of them — particularly *Thexder* and *Silpheed* — have sold quite well. The newest package from the Game Arts/Sierra arrangement is *Zeliard*, and it takes a big step forward in the action-adventure field.

You begin *Zeliard*'s simple but atmospheric plot in the evil town of Muralla, just west of the "caverns o'doom." You play Duke Garland, the only one who can destroy the Jashiin, the Head Evil Dude. In order to crush him, you must collect the Tears of Esmesanti, powerful crystals hidden in the caverns and guarded by huge beasties. In town you can stock up for your journey and gather information from townsfolk. After getting enough goodies and gossip, you're ready for the caverns.

The game picks up pace once you're underground. A quick sword and good timing are essential as you explore the caverns between towns. Most of the monsters you kill leave behind a bubble you can collect to add "almas" to your inventory. Almas are a sort of magic currency that can be exchanged for gold, which in turn can be used to buy better weapons, potions, or magic items. And upgrading these items becomes crucial as you descend deeper into the caverns.



In front of King Farishika's castle, you're ready to stock up for your journey. But first you'll need gold to buy supplies.

As in most role-playing games (RPGs), you must keep track of your character's life (hit points) as you progress from level to level. You also need to collect certain items, such as keys or icons, to facilitate your quest. Combat aids include spells and potions that boost your offensive and defensive abilities. Only experience brings you more spells, but you can buy potions at the witchcraft shop in any town. (Two tips: Be sure to keep a Magia stone with you for final combat rounds. And don't trust the Kioku feather — it can get you out of sticky spots, but only at great cost.)



Even with your first steps into the Cavern of Malicia, you encounter and slay a nasty critter.

Beyond these role-playing components, *Zeliard* is basically an action game — but an action game with brains. As you zip around and kill monsters, you must also find your way through mazes of passageways, avoid deadly traps, and learn new actions and techniques. But the spirit of *Zeliard* is kind — if you're on the brink of death, the spirits will whisk you back to Muralla, taking some gold for their troubles. If you've reached a fairly high level, it means a long return trip once there — but it sure beats the alternative.

Zeliard's graphics are lovely, if not stunning, and a multitude of features makes the game truly enjoyable to play. It's easy to install on a hard drive, and if you've got a sound card, the wonderful music will make you feel like dancing.

This is a game you can simply fall in love with. As arcade games go, *Zeliard* is not stunningly unique in style or techniques, but its wide variety of challenges and environments keeps it always fresh. As an RPG, it's not as deep as, say, an Ultima title, but it stands out as one of the few primarily action-oriented examples of its genre. As a hybrid, it holds its own in the arcade arena, while providing RPG players with a quick-and-dirty dose of action. Though hard-core RPG fans might not find quite enough here, most gamers will spend many a night spelunking through the caverns of *Zeliard*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, Tandy, MCGA, Hercules graphics; hard drive recommended; supports AdLib, Roland, and Tandy sound.

SPACE 1889

NEIL RANDALL



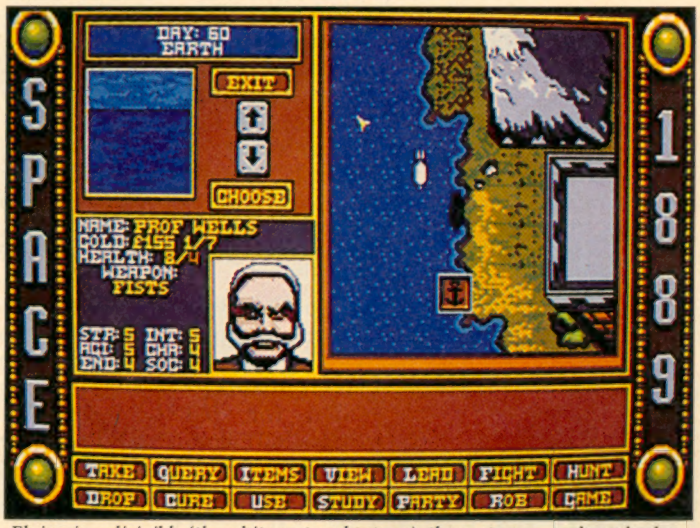
In northwest London, you'll intercept Claus von Schmelling, who has a report you desperately need. There's a problem, however — you can't afford it.

Space 1889 is the second role-playing product **Paragon Software** has produced in conjunction with Game Designers' Workshop. *Megatraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy*, a good idea flawed primarily by a clumsy combat system, was the first. Paragon is to be credited for taking criticism of that combat system to heart, because the designers revised *Megatraveller* and placed a similarly upgraded system in *Space 1889*. In other words, they listened.

That's good. So, for the most part, is *Space 1889*. Like its noncomputer predecessor, this game sports a bizarre premise: The Victorian concept of luminiferous ether has proven correct, and space travel is possible in the 19th century. The game begins with the assumption that Thomas Edison has discovered the ether and made it workable, and that society has changed notably as a result.

Well, maybe not all that much. This is still very clearly Victorian England and 19th-century America, but the ability to build ether-driven ships to head for Venus and Mars makes the game very much a piece of 19th-century science fiction as well. That's the strength of the original premise, and Paragon handles it well.

Like *Megatraveller*, *Space 1889* uses a fascinating character-creation system. True to the English frame of mind in the 19th century, you must belong to a social class, and these range from working class to aristocracy. You also have three physical and three psychological attributes which, combined with social level, let you choose careers. Careers include Army, Navy, Colonial Officer, Big Game Hunter, Dilettante Traveller, Reporter, Actor, Governess, Inventor, Engineer, Doctor, Scientist, Master Criminal, Smuggler, and Anarchist. Some careers are closed to women, one is closed to men, and each is dependent on attributes and social status. The character-creation system is a game unto itself, and players of the *Space 1889* noncomputer game might well use it to generate player and nonplayer characters alike.



Flying in a dirigible (the white rectangle at sea), the party approaches a harbor. Hopefully, this is San Francisco.

The adventure begins with your party overhearing a discussion about the discovery of King Tut's tomb. Using the overhead map of the building in which you start, you move from room to room, searching for items and talking to characters you meet. You have to face characters to talk to them (or rob them, for that matter), and this is somewhat clumsy — but once you have it mastered, this part of the game plays quickly and smoothly. You must rob one character of a crucial report ("Rob" is a menu item), then head to New York to find another character. He will lead you to San Francisco, and eventually you set out for Cairo. Before your quest is through, you'll have to build an ether flyer and journey to Mars, Venus, and even the caverns of Atlantis.

As in *Megatraveller*, a wealth of subplots keeps distracting you from the main storyline, but each is interesting enough to make you want to follow it through. Buffalo Bill Cody, Rasputin, P. T. Barnum, and a host of Martian and Venusian characters send you from place to place in what seems like a nonstop quest.

Space 1889 plays quickly and easily. The combat system is a significant step forward from the original Megatraveller system, and the attention to Victorian and pseudo-Victorian detail is impressive. The graphics could be a bit sharper, perhaps, but this game makes no compromises in the way of speed. It's fast, and it's easy to get lost or killed. And getting into space with an ether flyer is a truly unique experience.

GP

Hardware requirements: 512K minimum memory; VGA, EGA, CGA, and Tandy 16-color graphics; supports hard drive and mouse.

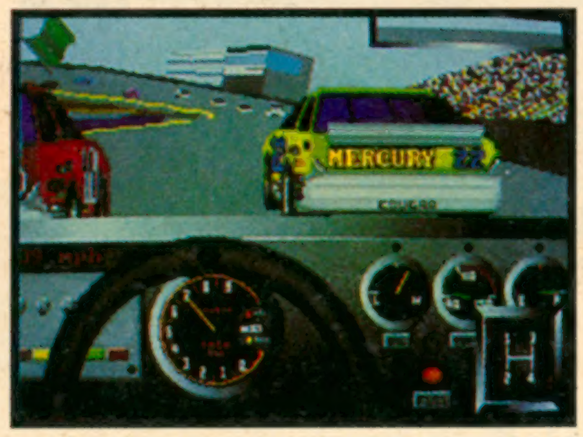
BILL ELLIOTT'S NASCAR CHALLENGE

BRIAN CARROLL

From street-cruising sports cars to hard-driving stock cars, just about every automobile you've ever fancied driving is available on disk for the PC. If NASCAR's muscle cars rev your engine, you might want to try **Konami's** *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge*, the first computer game endorsed by stock-car racing's governing body.

What you'll find in *NASCAR Challenge* is a mixed bag. First the bad news: It's extremely difficult to get a good feel for driving the cars. The experience might remind you of the frustration you felt the first time you tried to drive a car with a manual shift. Establishing a rapport with your automobile requires more track time than in many other driving simulations.

Now the good news. *NASCAR Challenge* is much more than driving laps around a high-banked oval for 500 miles. Bill Elliott, voted NASCAR's most popular driver five years in a row, helped out with the design of the game. And Elliott and company make sure you get to do more than redline your race car. Before you take your first lap, you must choose from three cars, eight racetracks, and two engines. Next, adjust your tire stagger (the difference in size between the left- and right-side tires), your spoiler angle, and your gear ratio for optimum acceleration. It's much simpler than it sounds, and the game manual does a fine job of describing what all of this shoptalk actually means for your car.



Flags, displayed in the upper left of the screen, relay vital information to drivers throughout the race. The green flag means the track is clear.

But don't worry about having to spend more time tinkering with your car than driving it on the racetrack. *NASCAR Challenge*'s fine attention to detail can only bog you down if you let it. You can leave your engine setup exactly as you found it and still run a good race.

Whatever you decide, don't expect to win the first time around. Getting a feel for the rugged driving requires more than a few practice laps. And if you're using EGA or CGA graphics, you'll probably find that the indistinct dashboard visuals make the learning curve a little steeper than you might expect.

In fact, although better than those in *Days of Thunder*, the bitmapped graphics in *NASCAR Challenge* are at times disappointing. For example, fire and debris are depicted using scattershot geometrical shapes, making it difficult to sense the drama of what can happen when cars hurtling around an asphalt track at 200 miles per hour actually collide. And until you can handle all that horsepower, collide they will.

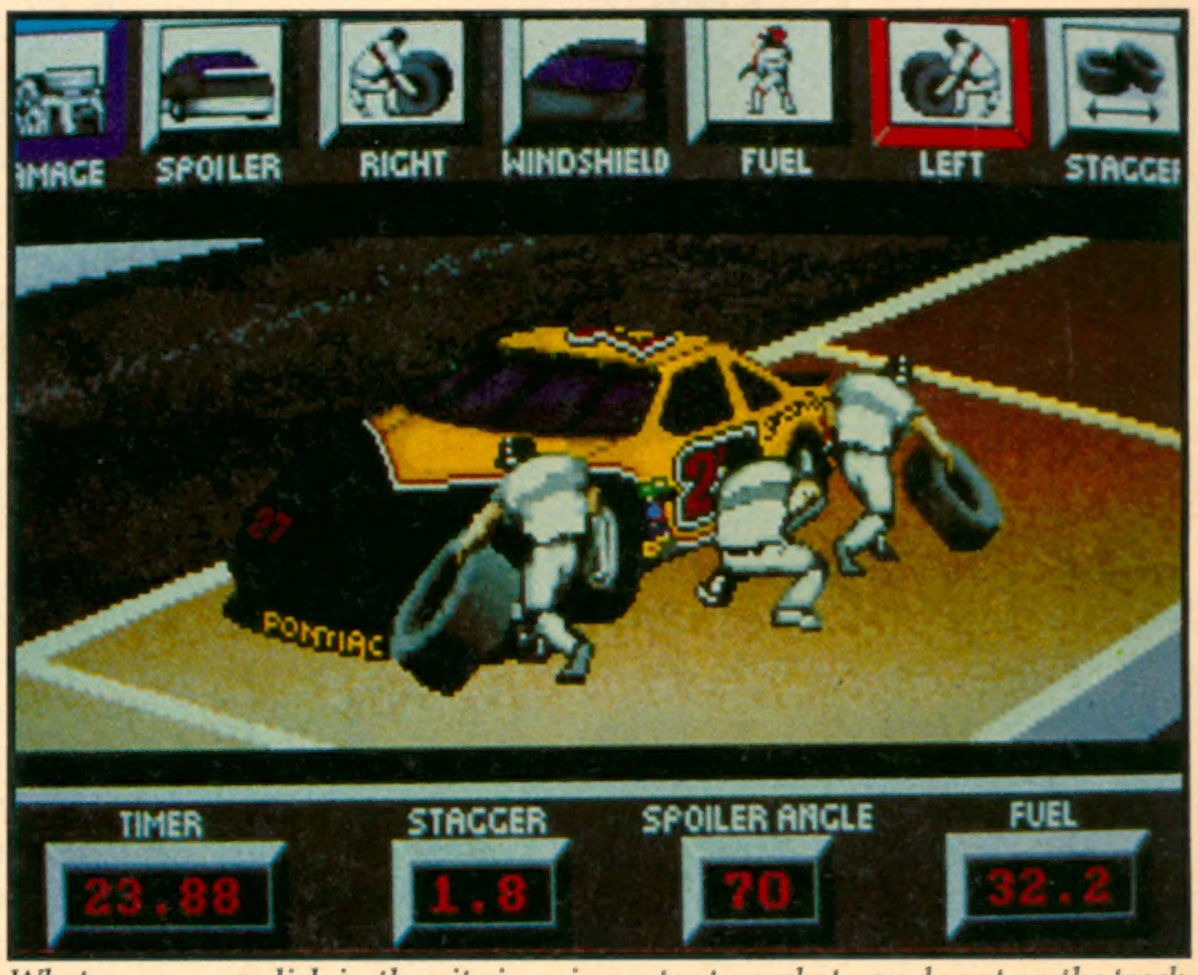
You'll probably be tempted to use VCR mode quite often — it lets you run instant replays of on-the-track events and view them from various angles. Crashes, of course, always provide the best subject matter for replays.

Once you know how to control your car, be sure to practice in the pits. It takes a deft touch to wheel in and out without eating up too much time. As NASCAR's good ol' boys will tell you, winning drivers are always backed by crack pit crews, so make every second of down time count.

You almost have to be a NASCAR fan to get the most out of this game. There are better driving (or racing) simulations available, but if it's the stock-car experience you're after, check out *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge*.

GP

Hardware requirements: 640K minimum memory; VGA, MCGA, EGA, CGA, or Hercules graphics; 10 MHz or higher recommended; joystick optional; supports sound boards.



What you accomplish in the pits is as important as what you do out on the track. The faster your crew performs the maintenance, the sooner you're back in the race.

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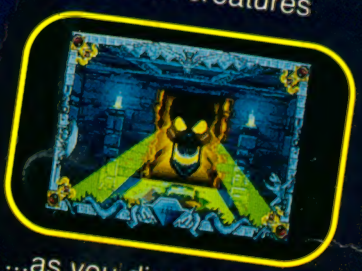
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